

Mountain Sound: Norway's Jazz Identity

By

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Abstract

Jazz musicians in Norway have cultivated a distinctive sound, driven by timbral markers and visual album aesthetics that are associated with the cold mountain valleys and fjords of their home country. This jazz dialect was developed in the decade following the Nazi occupation of Norway, when Norwegians utilized jazz as a subtle tool of resistance to Nazi cultural policies. This dialect was further enriched through the Scandinavian residencies of African American free jazz pioneers Don Cherry, Ornette Coleman, and George Russell, who tutored Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek. Garbarek is credited with codifying the “Nordic sound” in the 1960s and ‘70s through his improvisations on numerous albums released on the ECM label. Throughout this document I will define, describe, and contextualize this sound concept. Today, the Nordic sound is embraced by Norwegian musicians and cultural institutions alike, and has come to form a significant component of modern Norwegian artistic identity. This document explores these dynamics and how they all contribute to a Norwegian jazz scene that continues to grow and flourish, expressing this jazz identity in a world marked by increasing globalization.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv-v
Chapter One	2
Introduction: Setting the European Jazz Table	
Chapter Two	16
Occupation and Resistance	
Chapter Three	49
Sounding Modernism	
Chapter Four	62
(Re)defining Jazz	
Chapter Five	73
Free Jazz: Collective Controversy	
Chapter Six	99
Timbre	
Chapter Seven	113
ECM and the Sonic Palette	
Chapter Eight	134
Folk Identities	
Chapter Nine	158
The Jazz Education Model in Norway: A Brief Case Study	
Chapter Ten	167
The Norwegian Jazz Economy	
Chapter Eleven	175
Nu Jazz: Jaga Jazzist	
Conclusion	189
Appendix: Selected Recordings	195
Bibliography	199

List of Figures

Figure 1: Poster advertising Nazi <i>Entartete Musik</i> exhibition of 1938	34
Figure 2: Original design for cover of <i>Jonny spielt auf</i> piano score	34
Figure 3: LP cover of Keynote Recordings' <i>Fighting Men of Norway</i>	46
Figure 4: Chart of arts funding in Europe and U.S.	173
Figure 5: Cover art for <i>One-Armed Bandit</i>	179
Figure 6: Bass clarinet ostinato transcribed from "One-Armed Bandit"	183
Figures 7-9: Primary melody transcribed from "One-Armed Bandit"	184
Figure 10: Countermelody transcribed from "One-Armed Bandit"	185

Chapter One: Introduction

This document is an examination of the development of jazz and the “Nordic sound” in Norway. Jazz was imported from American recordings and mimicked by Norwegian musicians at the height of the swing era, but was suppressed by the Nazi occupation. After the war, Norwegian artists forged a new jazz style heavily influenced by the American avant-garde. A distinctive element of Norwegian identity is constructed around the country’s idiosyncratic jazz dialect, which is oriented around a handful of specific sonic and aesthetic markers and yet, paradoxically, favors a populist, genre-defying approach. Norwegian musicians borrow a vast array of historical styles and genres, particularly avant-garde, fusion, and other post-bop conventions, and reinterpret them as an expression of this Norwegian musical identity.

In the forthcoming chapters, I explore the historical context for the development of a Norwegian dialect in jazz that began in earnest during the 1940s. As a Nazi-occupied nation, Norway and its people were subjected to various prohibitions and bans of media, including newspapers, radio, and certain styles of music that the Nazis deemed “degenerate.” The first portion of this document explores these social factors and their influence on the earliest Norwegian jazz musicians. Chapter Two surveys the existing literature on civilian Norwegian resistance activities and the place of jazz within those activities and provide a brief chronology of the first Norwegian explorations of swing music and how it flexed and reacted to the Nazi decrees of the time.

Chapter Three examines how the jazz avant-garde of the late 1950s made inroads in Scandinavia, particularly Norway and Sweden, thanks to the work of George Russell, Don Cherry, and Ornette Coleman. I survey some existing literature about the activities

of these three men in Europe, their students and protégés, and their notions of culture and African American music. Russell and Cherry particularly influenced tenor saxophonist Jan Garbarek, and it is Garbarek who is credited, along with several influential Norwegian sidemen, with codifying the Norwegian dialect within the broader avant-garde scene. I consider existing research into Garbarek's career, media interviews with Garbarek, and analysis of his improvised music on two notable recordings in Chapter Seven.

Chapters Four and Five explore the social dynamics of jazz, the ever-present debate over the word itself, and models of investigation for free jazz practices and European improvisational aesthetics. Within Chapter Five, an examination of the role of African American free jazz practitioners in the cultivation of the Nordic sound illuminates the later work of Jan Garbarek, particularly his forays into folk music. Chapter Six discusses the timbral characteristics exhibited by Garbarek and his sidemen on ECM albums beginning in the late 1960s. I include a timbral outline of Garbarek's wide-ranging improvisation as recorded on 1970's *Afric Pepperbird*. Chapter Seven investigates the theoretical methodologies that are useful for analyzing free jazz practices, particularly collective free improvisation, where musicians rely on gestural markers and shifts of rhythm and timbre as improvisational cues instead of chord changes or cyclical forms. I then apply portions of these methodologies to Jan Garbarek's quartet and their recorded output.

Chapter Eight considers various writings on issues of ethnic identity and "folk authenticity" as it was expressed by Edvard Grieg in his folk-influenced concert music. In addition, I consider a similar perspective on Aaron Copland and his invocation of jazz in

his concert works, as seen through the eyes of his mentor Nadia Boulanger. This chapter additionally examines ways in which notions of Norwegianness and Americanness have concerned composers in the realm of concert music as readily as they have jazz musicians. I then situate the Norwegian jazz dialect as a continuation of this dynamic, albeit one that has grown so broad in scope and so equitable in influence that it represents a part of present-day Norway that the Norwegian state wishes to export as a tool of diplomacy.

Finally, I conclude with an examination of the present-day Norwegian jazz scene and its economic and social engines. I survey existing literature that documents the current practices of Norwegian jazz musicians and contextualize those within the broader framework of the Norwegian drive towards genre diversity and unorthodoxy. To this end, I discuss and analyze the recorded output of Jaga Jazzist, the Norwegian experimental jazz ensemble that is the most prominent exponent of Norway's jazz dialect in the present day. Jaga's approach to their music reflects a number of Norwegian priorities that have been documented throughout the history of the music, and it is the best representative of where jazz itself seems to be headed in the future. The Norwegian term for this style of music is "Nu Jazz" or "future jazz." I will define and discuss these genre terms in order to situate Jaga within the greater chronology of Norwegian jazz-influenced improvised music. Musical examples and brief transcriptions will round out my exploration of the past, present, and future trends in Norwegian jazz.

A Note on Sources

As Norwegian jazz is an active, vibrant musical tradition that is still defining itself, the majority of sources used in my discussion of present-day Norwegian jazz and

Norway's improvised music scene are located online. The *Norwegian Jazz Base*, a Norway-hosted online database of Norwegian jazz recordings dating from the 1920s, was a critical resource. This database also contains detailed histories of Norwegian jazz throughout the twentieth century. These histories were compiled by Bjørn Stendahl and Johs Bergh and translated into English by Per Husby. Stendahl is the premiere Norwegian-language jazz historian, and his name appears over and over again in my research. The recent book *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*¹ and the contemporary research of Luca Vitali provide a framework for my consideration of Norwegian jazz against the backdrop of a larger Scandinavian avant-garde music scene. Stuart Nicholson's work on jazz and globalization aided me in my consideration of issues of national identity. I am also indebted to the work of George E. Lewis, whose research has provided me with thoughtful perspectives on the transcultural exchange of European and African American improvisers.

Like many scholars of my generation, I have utilized social media as a tool to connect with musicians and hear their experiences in their own words. Twitter has proved particularly useful for following the musical activities of Norwegian musicians and the jazz-supporting institutions in that country. In addition, a great deal of information on the Norwegian resistance and its activities was gleaned from online obituaries in various international news outlets, as many participants in these resistance activities have passed away in recent years and their wartime exploits are receiving increased attention. A wealth of previously classified information regarding the Norwegian resistance has been released in recent years and is now accessible online, and this resource informed my

¹ Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino, eds., *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

consideration of Norwegian cultural resistance to Nazi rule. Research on the Norwegian jazz education model is detailed primarily in various Internet sources, particularly popular media articles. *Jazz Times*, an online magazine, is a rich source for album reviews of recent Norwegian jazz recordings. The music criticism website *Pitchfork* also provided me with a critical perception of the Nordic sound, allowing me to trace the consistent identification of its traits by numerous active critics, which is a common theme in the contemporary journalistic discussion of Norway's jazz tradition.

I have combined these sources with scholarly works on improvisation, free jazz, and modernism, as well as jazz theory works by Keith Waters and others. The research of Paul Berliner and Ingrid Monson informed my overall methodology for discussing the group interaction and collective participation of Norwegian musicians of the 1960s and 1970s. Ornette Coleman's own words, taken from interviews and editorials in *Down Beat* magazine, were enormously useful in tracing the link from Coleman to the recorded output of Jan Garbarek. Amiri Baraka's *Blues People* provided a valuable perspective on the potential of free jazz to work as an agent of social change within the broader African American musical community, and also represents a contemporary perspective on the work of Coleman and others involved in creating and sculpting the "New Thing" within and beyond Norway. James Dickenson's doctoral dissertation connecting Norwegian folk music and the free jazz of Jan Garbarek and his ECM cohorts was illuminating and endowed me with a longer view of the influence of Edvard Grieg and traditional Norwegian folk culture on the eventual manifestation of a Norwegian jazz sound. I am also indebted to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* in consideration of how

each of these factors contributes to modern-day Norway staking a portion of its identity on native jazz expressions.

Setting the European Jazz Table

In the bitterly cold winter of 1944, as cracks were beginning to appear in the German war machine, a handful of Luftwaffe officers met with several American Army Air Corps counterparts in Saint-Nazaire, France under a flag of truce. The Luftwaffe pilots were cut off from the rest of the Wehrmacht forces in France. They were bored, hungry, and cold, and no longer interested in fighting. What had started as a brief truce quickly turned into a sort of impromptu officer's club for the Germans. They posed for photographs with the American officers, traded pleasantries and sundry items, and socialized. Many German officers saw the writing on the wall as their comrades suffered on the Russian front and the Americans began to make inroads against Wehrmacht forces throughout Europe. Since the "main theatre had moved east to the Fatherland," these Germans were isolated from the center of the action.² "One hundred thousand German soldiers were cut off and worn out here on the Brittany coast. The Allies were prepared to starve them out, but civilians were starving too...the opposing sides began to fraternize."³

A young German lieutenant chatted with an African American officer, who was very interested in the camera dangling from the Luftwaffe man's neck, and the two men proceeded to negotiate for luxury items. The American offered a few cartons of Lucky Strikes and several pairs of nylon pantyhose for the camera, but the Luftwaffe man was uninterested. Then the German paused, considering. He had been keeping an eye out for a particular luxury item, and the American officer in front of him, the German presumed,

² Mike Zwerin, *Swing Under the Nazis: Jazz as a Metaphor for Freedom* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 3.

³ Ibid.

was potentially his best shot at acquiring one of the most coveted pieces of Americana in Germany. The Americans were known to trade musical recordings that were otherwise banned or strictly regulated in Germany and its occupied territories. The Luftwaffe officer, Oberleutnant Dietrich Schulz-Koehn, summoned his best English: “Do you have any Count Basie records?”⁴

Mike Zwerin explains that this scenario was but one of many that took place during World War II. The official Nazi position on jazz in 1944 was decidedly adversarial, with the stylistic features of the music that might identify it as “jazz” shaved down until the Nazi-sanctioned style produced little more than glorified waltzes and foxtrots. Real American jazz was officially forbidden. What might motivate a Luftwaffe officer to risk censure and possible punishment just to listen to Count Basie? What accounts for the overwhelming appeal of American music among Europeans, beginning with the 1918 arrival of James Reese Europe’s Harlem Hellfighters in France? These questions can be pondered through the lens of the Norwegian experience. Norway suffered Nazi occupation, censorship, and oppression but nonetheless rebuilt and has thrived as a center for jazz since the 1960s. The country has since built part of its national identity around the distinctive, idiosyncratic brand of jazz it has been exporting since the heyday of avant-garde label ECM Records. Nazi rule pushed Norwegians more assertively towards their folk culture, and this included the burgeoning jazz scene in major cities like Oslo, Bergen (the birthplace of Edvard Grieg), and Trondheim.

Recordings of American music grew scarce in Europe during the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s, and many record imports were banned altogether. The influence of

⁴ Ibid.

American music and culture on Europe throughout the early twentieth century was viewed by some as crude and corrupting, with fears of Europe's "Americanization" fueling the burgeoning nationalism of 1930s Germany.⁵ Fascists throughout Europe argued that America "was a mongrel society based on race mixing. Rightists focused more often on America as a threat to their tradition, society, and culture."⁶ Yet, the people of Europe could not help falling under the spell of that new, brash, and extroverted American art form that had flown in from across the Atlantic Ocean: jazz. In the 1930s, swing music exploded in popularity and, along with Hollywood films, came to represent the culture of the United States on the global stage. Peter Townsend's study of jazz in American cultural consciousness describes the patriotic potential of American swing, the most enthusiastically embraced American musical export, noting the popularity of the music before and during World War II and its use as a tool for advancing American interests: "Even before the commencement of the Second World War, this valorization of swing as a representative product of America is observable in popular cultural representation."⁷ Townsend references the popular Mickey Rooney vehicle *Strike Up the Band*, a 1940 musical featuring Rooney as a swing band conductor and Gene Krupa-esque drum wizard, leading a group of white musicians through many rollicking swing numbers; the film concludes with Rooney donning a Navy admiral's

⁵ Nazi officials like Alfred Rosenberg contended that America's cultural and racial mixing made it "inferior" to Germany's ostensibly "pure" racial stock; in addition, the prevailing fascist conspiracy theory about a secret cabal of world-controlling Jews was popular among German authorities and propaganda of the period portrayed Jews as the "puppet masters" of the United States. See Barry Rubin, *Hating America: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶ Rubin, *Hating America*, 76.

⁷ Peter Townsend, "Rhythm is our Business: The Swing Era 1935-45," *Jazz in American Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 89.

uniform and saluting the American flag. These connotations of Americanness hitched to jazz are a vital component of the music's spread beyond the borders of the United States.

Jazz held a powerful allure for Europeans: it was modernist, it was "primitive," it was the essence of bodily movement and eroticism, and it represented everything American to a Europe that was still reeling from the unified slaughter of the Great War. American culture was everything hip and cool, and even a bit dangerous, to Europeans who clamored for American music, dance, and song; since the advent of mass media, they saw America as "a cultural space that is more glamorous and adventurous than their own, bound up in discourses of youth, glamour, energy, and newness; an America less concerned with history than with a vision of the future that resonates with the here-and-now."⁸ This dynamic accounts for jazz's early European popularity, but also poses additional questions. It would be foolish to argue that jazz is still associated with "Americanness" in the current internet-fueled era of globalization, for, as Fabian Holt points out, audiences "continue to be drawn to the creativity and sophistication of jazz performance and how it speaks to a world of diverse and complex experiences of locality."⁹ Indeed, as *Telegraph* critic Ivan Hewett points out, Norway "could well be a net exporter of jazz to America, a cultural irony if there ever was one."¹⁰

This concept of jazz as a reimagined local dialect on a global stage is pervasive throughout the myriad national jazz scenes and subcultures that exist in all corners of the planet, even far-flung locations and frontiers. The residents of McMurdo Station, the

⁸ Stuart Nicholson, *Jazz and Culture in a Global Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2014), Kindle version, Preface.

⁹ Fabian Holt, "Jazz and the Politics of Home in Scandinavia," *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*, Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 74.

¹⁰ Ivan Hewett, "Marius Neset: 'I Don't Mean to Sound Norwegian,'" *The Telegraph*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/worldfolkandjazz/11478092/Marius-Nestet-Interview.html> (accessed January 3, 2019).

American outpost where most of Antarctica's summer population lives and works, have shared recordings of jazz performances on social media in celebration of International Jazz Day.¹¹ Despite many years of American media evangelizing about jazz as "America's only original art form," a discernable sense of American nationalism and patriotism is no longer expressed through jazz; instead, those sentiments are more readily expressed via modern country music (and some musical theatre), with stereotyped images of American culture, such as pickup trucks, the Fourth of July, and the girl next door. To assume jazz reflects an "American" character is to assume there is one holistic American identity. Americans, like jazz, are a pastiche of elements from different places and cultures. It follows that a music as individual and personal as jazz could explode throughout the world and come to have meaning in new locales, with its "Americanness" rarely considered in its (re)creation. Paradoxically, however, some European audiences have long maintained a preference for "authentic" American jazz and have lauded American musicians, ascribing to them special prowess that Europeans could never achieve. This dynamic is discussed in a later chapter.

Norway, a nation of five million people, has shaped the development of the post-war free and avant-garde jazz scenes, in the process crafting a distinctive regional dialect that is identified with the aesthetics of Scandinavia. In Norway, jazz held a strong appeal before World War II, and the jazz musicians of this nation were immersed in the process of imitation and emulation of American swing music as hostilities came to their shores. Post-war, young Norwegian musicians began a process of exploration, guided by American expatriates, which liberated the music from any traditional constraints. Today,

¹¹ "McMurdo Station, Antarctica Celebrates International Jazz Day 2014," *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsKuMspDgFE> (accessed January 18, 2018).

Norwegians consider jazz one of their finest cultural exports, and this dialect has been influenced and informed by the robust folk culture of the Norwegian people. The Norwegian government is proud of its jazz reputation and funds musicians well beyond what an American musician might hope to receive in grant funding; the economics of jazz in a socialist democratic nation are discussed in Chapter Ten. Even the late nineteenth century Norwegian nationalist composer Edvard Grieg plays a role in this story, laying the groundwork for later Norwegian musicians to explore the folk materials and the evocation of place that have come to characterize jazz in Norway.

Stuart Nicholson has written about the formation of American identity around the cultural exports of ragtime, the blues, and jazz. “Towards the end of the nineteenth century,” Nicholson writes, “the whole notion of a distinctive culture came under particular scrutiny in the United States as intellectuals, artists, writer, and poets began to grapple with the notion of ‘American-ness’ in their creations.”¹² During the nineteenth century, Americans began to establish musical institutions that resembled those of old Europe: conservatories and opera houses and American symphonies.

However, European attitudes towards upstart American musicians were bemused at best, and hostile at worst. Popular opinion among the musical elite of places like Vienna and Paris was that Americans were simply unable to produce music on par with the “greats” of the Western classical canon, unfortunately hamstrung by their place of origin. “America was the country of railroads but not of musicians,” wrote Paris Conservatoire piano teacher Pierre Zimmermann in 1842, rejecting the application of the

¹² Nicholson, *Jazz and Culture in a Global Age*. Kindle edition, preface.

young American pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk on the basis of his nationality.¹³ The new awareness of an American dialect in art and music offered new challenges for the musicians and intellectuals responsible for producing the American cultural exports of the early twentieth century. These Americans, Nicholson contends, were “trying to find ways in which they could reflect an ‘American culture’ that would not subsequently be regarded as a footnote to European culture.”¹⁴ Jazz in particular carries with it a loaded history, originating in the United States under the social pressures that resulted after the abolition of slavery. While jazz has gone on to flourish in various parts of Europe, it took some time for the American audiences to acknowledge the contributions of European jazz musicians.

Jazz, Nicholson contends, “has been so dominated by American excellence that there has been an understandable lack of curiosity inside the United States about jazz outside American borders – the global jazz scene.”¹⁵ There are many complex factors at work in the global reach of this music, and a fascination with American culture is only one piece of the story. Nicholson is careful to point out that an underexplored area of historical jazz studies may hold some clues to the global reach of jazz, noting, “the success of the jazz education business in conquering the global market a half-century later [1970s] is often overlooked.”¹⁶ This broad educational dynamic is beyond the scope of this document, but the Norwegian system of jazz education and its notable differences from the American jazz educational industrial complex are considered in Chapter Nine.

¹³ Louis Moreau Gottschalk and Jeanne Behrend, ed. *Notes of a Pianist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 297.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Global jazz musicians have since attempted to establish themselves as being on par with conventionally celebrated Americans, with a few Europeans gaining significant fame post-war; these musicians are discussed in a later chapter. Americans haven't necessarily fallen behind in the world jazz environment; rather, the rest of the world seems to have finally caught up. "It is well documented how jazz became a global phenomenon during the 1920s,"¹⁷ writes Nicholson, and indeed, it is not my intention to recount the spread and rise in popularity of the art form worldwide.¹⁸ Rather, this document considers how jazz can shed its American signifiers and take on a new form in a new place, shaped by the individuality of many Europeans who realized that they could not continue copying the American style, and how the notion of dialect and "European jazz" was shaped in Norway following the Second World War.

The avant-garde experimentation that distinguished modernist music in the early twentieth century was vital in the development and expression of what is known today as the Nordic sound. Norwegian jazz is a case study in identity formation through music, in shaping and assimilating an art form that is identified with Norwegian culture nearly as readily as fjords, folk song, and Grieg's peasant dances. Also crucial in understanding this adoption of jazz into the Norwegian musical dialect is the transcultural influence rendered on Norwegian improvisers by the collective of African American avant-garde jazz practitioners active in the 1960s. Some of these musicians include George Russell, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, and Albert Ayler. Russell and famed musician/producer

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ In addition to Stuart Nicholson's work on the global jazz scene, other sources for inquiry into the global movement include the aforementioned *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*; Luca Vitali's *The Sound of the North: Norway and the European Jazz Scene*; the recent anthology *The History of European Jazz* by Francesco Martinelli; E. Taylor Atkins' *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* and *Jazz Planet*; and Penny Von Eschen's *Satchmo Blows up the World*.

Quincy Jones “enjoyed cult status among Scandinavian musicians” following their visits to Sweden and Denmark; Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek personally studied with Russell, who called the Norwegian one of the finest musicians he had worked with.¹⁹ Before we can consider these influences, we must look to the emergence of this music in Norway and the test of Nazi oppression that it and its practitioners faced. Perhaps the most significant factor in shaping early Norwegian jazz was that which also represents one of the darkest chapters in the young nation’s history.

¹⁹ James W. Dickenson, “The Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz, 1945-1995” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Salford, 2003), 86.

Chapter Two: Occupation and Resistance

Jazz emerged in Norway as it did in the rest of Europe: through recordings, and later via touring groups of musicians. Some of the earliest recordings circulated in Norway featured the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, but saxophonist Sidney Bechet enjoyed increasing fame in Europe throughout the early 1920s and his recordings were also in demand. French critic Ernest Ansermet's account of witnessing Bechet performing in Paris is detailed in a later chapter. Many of the first Norwegian jazz bands were formed in the early 1920s, some with names that reflected the turbulent politics of the zeitgeist. Economic instability impacted Norwegian life, art, and culture as it did in other European countries following World War I. Despite Norway's neutrality in the conflict, the country was nonetheless impacted by the social turmoil that followed the war. Norwegians watched dozens of political parties come and go as nine different governments, almost all of them minority or extremist administrations, variously controlled the nation during the interwar period.

A number of local and regional jazz orchestras were founded in Norway following World War I in response to the demand for American dance band music. The Trondheim Young Communists' Jazzband was formed in 1922 and performed typical dance music of the day, as well as copies of what they heard on recordings by the likes of Paul Whiteman and the Savoy Quartet. Like most European jazz musicians of the 1920s and 1930s, the young Norwegians playing this hot new music were in a stage of imitation, learning by rote the intricacies of tailgate trombone and singing English lyrics they did not understand. Yet, they tinkered with a homegrown style, fostered by visits

from well-known musicians including a notable European. “During the 1930s, Django Reinhardt visited Oslo,” notes James Dickenson:

He can lay considerable claim to being the first European jazz musician of world class who became a model for several generations of jazz guitarists, and at the same time developed a repertoire which did not slavishly follow the pattern of the time. If one is searching for a starting point in tracing the ancestry of European jazz and its interplay with folk music then Reinhardt must be a strong candidate.¹

Reinhardt’s influence was best felt through the success of Norwegian guitarist Robert Normann, who performed with one of the many “string swing” groups that appeared in Norway in the 1930s. Reinhardt himself praised Normann’s playing, and the self-taught Normann developed a unique playing style that mirrored Reinhardt’s own unconventional guitar technique.²

The German occupation of World War II revealed the beginnings of a distinctively Norwegian approach to jazz. The 1920s and 1930s were a period of experimentation as Norwegian musicians imitated, then began to assimilate, this American style of music. Critical to a deeper understanding of the development of Norwegian jazz is the role and form of this jazz as it emerged under Nazi occupation. The Nazis took very specific stances towards all manner of art, and many higher-ranking Nazi leaders made no effort to hide their contempt for jazz.

The story of Norway’s occupation years is still being written as more documentation comes to light. In the late 1980s, Norwegian officials released previously top-secret information about resistance activities. With this wealth of new information, scholars began to uncover more information about the scope of Norwegian resistance,

¹ Dickenson, “Impact of Norwegian Folk Music,” 49.

² “Django in Norway,” *Gypsy Jazz UK*, <https://gypsyjazzuk.wordpress.com/gypsy-jazz-uk-home/django-around-europe/1267-2/> (accessed May 18, 2016).

which ranged from acts of sabotage and armed covert action against Germans, to more passive concepts like physical symbols of resistance unity, such as a paper clip or red knit cap, and underground musical performances. While many Norwegians resisted the Nazi regime, either passively or overtly, nearly as many found themselves making difficult choices in order to survive. This encouragement to collaborate was by design, for Hitler sought a country full of blue-eyed people he could shape into an ideal outpost of his “thousand year Reich.” The Nazis went to great lengths to convert as many Norwegians as possible to Nazism, and regime officials appealed to a shared sense of Aryanness, but Norway’s people suffered just as much as those living in France or Poland.

Vidkun Quisling staged a coup d’état with the assistance of the Nazi invasion force, and became the de facto Prime Minister of Norway following the invasion of April 9, 1940.³ The country had officially proclaimed its neutrality in the growing conflict, but this was irrelevant to German ambitions of European conquest, both spiritual and material. An obituary of one of the last living Norwegian resistance fighters, who engaged in numerous act of sabotage against the Nazi occupiers, explains that the Germans “were heavily dependent on Swedish iron ore, which went by rail to Norway’s Atlantic ports when the direct route through Sweden and across the Baltic was closed by ice. It was then shipped to Germany via the complex waterways between the mainland and offshore islands. Most of this route was inside Norwegian waters.”⁴

³ Quisling’s betrayal of his country is still commemorated through the pejorative use of his last name to describe a traitor who collaborates with the enemy.

⁴ “Highest-decorated hero of the Norwegian WWII Resistance,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/highest-decorated-hero-of-the-norwegian-wwii-resistance-20120613-20ad8.html> (accessed June 21, 2018).

The German invasion, dubbed Operation Weserübung, proceeded with very little hindrance.⁵ The Norwegian military was completely unprepared for combat and could offer no real resistance to the mechanized expeditionary force of the Germans. A combination of luck and cunning planning meant that Hitler caught the Norwegian leadership completely off guard. The Luftwaffe bombed many villages and municipalities to nothing in the invasion, which dragged on for weeks despite the limited partisan resistance. Thus began a five-year occupation, enabled by collaborative elements in the Norwegian government. King Haakon VII and his family fled to England, where they maintained a government-in-exile. French and British expeditionary forces landed on Norwegian shores in an attempt to stop the spreading invasion, but after two months the underequipped Allies withdrew and Norway was officially subjugated: "...from then on Norwegian society was systematically reorganized after German and Nazi principles."⁶

Nicholson Baker's *Human Smoke*, a collection of vignettes documenting the unraveling of Europe prior to and during World War II, describes the "midnight landings on Norwegian soil of small English and French forces, which were set upon by German airplanes...the English had no snowshoes. One group commandeered some horse-drawn sleds from local peasants and surged through the drifts."⁷ Baker further describes how Royal Air Force planes sent to Norway to slow the invasion were destroyed when the Luftwaffe bombed the frozen lake on which they were parked. Ultimately, all Allied efforts to quell the Nazi push ended in retreat, and the British bombed occupied Oslo

⁵ This translates to "Weser Exercise," a reference to the Weser River, which flows from Lower Saxony in Germany into the North Sea that surrounds Norway.

⁶ Bjorn Stendahl and Johs Bergh, trans. Per Husby. "Sigarett Stomp – Jazz in Norway 1940-1950," ^{8th} *Nordic Jazz Conference Report* (Trondheim: Nordic Jazz Conference, 2008), 18.

⁷ Nicholson Baker, *Human Smoke* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2008), 169.

(doing more damage to civilians than to the regime) as a last gasp prior to their withdrawal.

For the duration of the occupation, illegal BBC News broadcasts, transcribed and distributed via underground newspapers, kept Norwegians in touch with the activities of the Allies and their ousted ruler. As Bjørn Stendahl points out, “With the occupation came prohibitive laws and other restrictions including the suppression of free speech, but on the other hand this also gave rise to periods of very lively cultural activity – for better or worse.”⁸ By mid-1942, martial law had been imposed in various municipalities, including Trondheim and its suburbs, and more than thirty Norwegians were killed by soldiers as a result. This was the pretense for the eventual roundup and execution or deportation of Jews in Norway.

The Nazis had a different set of goals for Norway than many other nations they occupied during World War II. Norwegians, after all, were considered racially superior—blue-eyed and blonde—and thus the Nazis desired another sort of social experiment. “In Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, the Nazi policy was to annihilate the culture of the people by destroying the material manifestations of their civilization and by exterminating the intellectual leaders,” notes Helga Stene. “In Norway, the Nazi policy was not to annihilate but to pervert. The Germans hoped to establish in Norway a model political state which would demonstrate to the world the superiority of Nordic peoples.”⁹ This did not result in a kinder, gentler Nazi regime, but rather, one that broadcast the appearance of voluntary capitulation to the superior Nazi method of governance. Hitler wanted it to appear as if Norwegians willingly submitted to their doctrine, touting the

⁸ Bjørn Stendahl, “Stomping in the Blackout,” *Det Virtuelle Musikbibliotek*, http://dvm.nu/periodical/ns/ns_1991/ns_1991_03/stomping-in-the-blackout/ (accessed May 17, 2017).

⁹ Helga Stene, “Education in Occupied Norway,” *Pi Lambda Theta Journal* 25, no. 3 (1946), 80.

country as proof of the effectiveness of Nazi ideals and the supremacy of Aryans over such “sub-humans” as Slavs and Jews. Among the many Nazi policies that took effect in Norway, one of the most despicable was the SS-directed breeding initiative called *Lebensborn* (literally “fountain of life”) that was designed to produce children of racially pure Aryan stock. Participants were extensively screened to ensure that they met racial purity requirements, according to Nazi policies on “racial hygiene.” Young, single women were impregnated by SS men and then provided welfare by the German state.¹⁰

The Nazis went to great lengths to flatter Nordic sentiment. One particular piece of propaganda recast the familiar Nazi salute as a thousand-year-old Viking tradition to appeal to the Norwegian sense of national pride. Most Norwegians saw through the pandering, though there was a vocal contingent of collaborators who embraced the notion of Nordic superiority and joined the *Nasjonal Samling*, the Norwegian branch of the NSDAP. The Germans and the Nazi parties were justly afraid of the social and educational independence of Norwegians and as the occupation progressed, efforts towards censorship and restriction accelerated. “Because the Nazis feared the influence of Norwegian educators on the thinking of the people,” writes Stene, “they arrested unlawfully and deported ten percent of the Norwegian teachers.”¹¹ In addition to controlling information, the Nazis and their Norwegian collaborators also aggressively

¹⁰ These women were encouraged to give birth at one of the many state-run maternity facilities, where their babies would then be placed up for adoption to racially screened prospective parents or allowed to grow up under the care of Nazi matrons and SS teachers, receiving special diets and a thorough Nazi education. More than 20 of these maternity homes appeared in occupied nations, and most of them were in Norway. The Norwegian occupation government collaborated fully with the Nazi leadership to implement the program among Norwegians – a group considered ideal breeding stock for their strong Aryan characteristics and ethnic connections to the romanticized Norse past. Germans fathered roughly 12,000 Norwegian children born between 1940 and 1945, and about 6,000 were born in Lebensborn facilities.

¹¹ Stene, “Education in Occupied Norway,” 80.

pushed Norwegians to join the Nazi party and to officially denounce Haakon VII and his government.

All other political organizations were dissolved by September 1940; the Norwegians had no democratic representation or recourse in the face of increasing Nazi suppression. “This and many other episodes,” notes Stene, “incited the Norwegian civilians not to cooperation but to resistance.”¹² Resistance was carried out in both violent and non-violent forms, but most of the active opponents to the regime used underground, non-violent means to resist the growing menace, as violent measures were brutally punished by the Nazis. At stake was nothing more than the preservation of Norway’s cultural heritage before it could be assimilated and replaced by the cultural ideals of Germany. “This resistance was centered on the question of how Norway could maintain its cultural and national identity during an occupation of indefinite length.”¹³ Despite the appeal to a mythologized Aryan heritage offered by Hitler, Norwegians preserved their identity and teased out new threads of culture from the oppression of their occupiers.

Of the many modes of resistance, humor and folklore became powerful ways for Norwegians to connect with their exiled ruler and their cultural identity. Symbols of solidarity that covertly referenced Norwegian resistance principles became common, such as the wearing of lapel pins, flowers, and symbols of the exiled monarchy. In the fall of 1940, “Some Oslo students decided that wearing a paper clip in the lapel would signify solidarity. *Binders* is Norwegian for ‘paper clip,’ so wearing it suggested: *Vi binder*

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jasper Goldberg, “Norwegian teachers prevent Nazi takeover of education, 1942,” *Global Nonviolent Action Database*, Swarthmore College, <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/norwegian-teachers-prevent-nazi-takeover-education-1942> (accessed October 18, 2016).

sammen – ‘we bind together, united we stand.’”¹⁴ When the Nazis caught wind of these various resistance symbols, German soldiers reacted by forcibly removing them from people’s clothing. In response, writes Jasper Goldberg, “Some people responded to having their pins ripped off by soldiers by placing sharp blades behind the pin to harm anyone who tried to rip it off.”¹⁵ Another potent symbol of resistance was the red stocking cap (known as *Rede Toppluer*), embraced by Norwegian citizens during the winter of 1941 after the Nazis attempted to confiscate all red clothing for its associations with the Soviet Army. In response to the increasing restrictions, Norwegians practiced many other forms of civil disobedience. Young people passed around chapbooks of anti-Nazi jokes and satirical stories. Subversive children’s books, anti-Nazi Christmas cards (some depicting the vaunted German eagle as a scruffy crow), and other materials were circulated among Norwegian citizens at great risk to those who printed and distributed them.

Some of the most vocal opposition to Nazi rule and collaborative occupation governor Vidkun Quisling came from Norway’s educators and many of their students, who represented the primary front in Hitler’s battle for Norwegian minds. Quisling tried to stifle Norway’s academic class when he “created a new Norwegian Teacher’s Union, which was to be led by the Norwegian storm troopers (occupation forces), and required all teachers to join on February 5, 1942.”¹⁶ This decree was immediately met with vocal resistance as “an underground group in Oslo sent out a short statement for teachers to copy and mail to the authorities stating their refusal to participate... between 8,000 and

¹⁴ Kathleen Stokker, *Folklore Fights the Nazis: Humor in Occupied Norway, 1940-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 71.

¹⁵ Goldberg, “Norwegian teachers prevent Nazi takeover of Education, 1942.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

10,000 of Norway's 12,000 teachers" stated their disapproval.¹⁷ As a result of this mass act of defiance, Quisling ordered all schools closed, which caused even greater consternation among Norwegian parents, "200,000 of whom wrote letters of protest to the government. In addition, teachers continued to hold their classes in private, defying government orders."¹⁸

When Quisling's government responded by arresting and deporting roughly one thousand Norwegian teachers, nearly five hundred of whom wound up in concentration camps, underground resistance organizations raised money to pay the teachers' salaries and look after their families. Quisling, aware that his fight was a losing one, finally capitulated in November of 1942, and the teachers returned from the concentration camps and were allowed back into Norwegian society. Jasper Goldberg points out, "Thanks perhaps in equal measure to Norwegian pride and fascist oppression, the people of Norway had solidified into a resistance movement that successfully defended the schools from incorporation into the fascist state."¹⁹ After the occupation, however, it would take some time for the Norwegian education system—including its music education system—to recover from regime activities.

Norwegians also resisted Nazi occupation in public interactions with collaborators, which included pretending not to speak German (a language most urban Norwegians could speak) in the presence of Nazi officials and such passive concepts as silently refusing to sit next to a German on a bus or train. The Germans were so irritated by the practice that they made it illegal to stand on a bus if there were available seats.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

While the Nazis seemed to have a counter-move for every new resistance method, and indeed used violent means to suppress many of these methods, the Norwegian people maintained this solidarity throughout the occupation and worked to uphold and maintain Norwegian cultural identity. One means of continued social expression and identity exploration, at least in the early years of the war, was jazz.

Norwegian Jazz Under the Nazis

Prior to occupation, Norway had a few dozen jazz clubs and many public dance halls, as well as regular radio broadcasts of swing music. Recordings of jazz imported from the United States grew increasingly rare as the war continued, but all signs showed that swing music would only grow in popularity, just as it did in mainland Europe. The occupation, however, presented a complete shift in the way that Norwegians consumed music, and gradually public concert life declined to only official Nazi-sanctioned events. Before about 1942, public concerts featuring dance bands playing local versions of American swing and New Orleans-style jazz were all the rage, and an active music scene thrived. There were plentiful gigs for musicians, as the demand for live entertainment was also driven by later Nazi censorship of broadcast media. But by the winter of 1943, increased Nazi restrictions had pushed music, especially jazz, to the fringe. The Nazis developed and deployed jazz for their own purposes, banning and restricting it in some cases, profiting from and appropriating it in other cases.

Jazz music had been all the rage in Weimar Germany, and once the Nazis assumed power, the music was quickly singled out as “degenerate art” and carefully regulated. Ultimately, Joseph Goebbels used jazz as a propaganda tool, watered down for Teutonic values; jazz as an American might define it was banned outright in 1938. When

Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, the regime immediately set about creatively editing the musical history of Germany, with musicologists given the task of legitimizing the Nazi position on music. These scholars “contributed, through statements, manifestoes, articles and books, to the justification of totalitarian design and practice.”²⁰ The early Nazi effort to define and restrict certain forms of music was aided and abetted by scholars, musicians, and conservatory officials within the regime, who “offered advice and assistance to the government in establishing the correct racial, political and artistic profile” of Nazi-approved music.²¹

In 1933, Vidkun Quisling founded the *Nasjonal Samling*, the Norwegian incarnation of the NSDAP Nazi Party, which by that time was working methodically to gain complete control of German politics and culture. From the beginnings of the Nazi government, its leaders understood the propaganda potential of demonizing certain types of music while elevating others as embodiments of the glorious Aryan future that awaited Germans. This process continued in the countries that Germany occupied, starting with Poland in 1939. By the time Norway was invaded in 1940, Nazi ideas about musical purity were a major component of the cultural propaganda used so effectively by Hitler’s propagandist Joseph Goebbels. This ultimately led to intense pressure on classical musicians to avoid even the slightest association with jazz artists, and stifled jazz musicians’ efforts to organize in Norway.

In practice, however, banning a musical style proved more difficult than was probably anticipated, both from an economic perspective and a cultural one. Berndt Ostendorf has written eloquently about the “double consciousness of German Nazis” who

²⁰ Michael Meyer, “The Nazi Musicologist as Myth Maker in the Third Reich,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 10 (1975), 649.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 651.

struggled to determine if “jazz was a child of ‘modernism’ and hence degenerate, or of Henry Ford’s modernization, and hence in tune with the *Aufbruch*.”²² This meant that though jazz was officially banned in Germany and occupied territories, remnants and signifiers of the music lingered throughout the war through clever subversion of restrictive policies, and the underground scene continued to nurture creativity and expression under the noses of officials. Michael Kater describes jazz as consistently occupying this quantum state, observing, “jazz was one of those paradoxical quantities that could serve, from 1933 on, as a catalyst for those opposing the regime and those conforming to it.”²³

The Nazi’s anti-jazz fervor was rooted in several objections ranging from the musical to the racial. The party’s propaganda towards the music evolved over time, with various phases in the party’s history marked by specific antagonisms towards one aspect of jazz performance or the culture surrounding it. When Hitler came to power, the Nazis decried jazz on the basis of its lineage as African American music; as Kater puts it, jazz at this stage “tended to be berated as the inferior product primarily of the Negro race, inferior because of the constituent qualities of atonality and rhythmic chaos.”²⁴ Particularly before the full-scale Nazi aggression towards Jews in the later 1930s, anti-blackness was a powerful current in German political thought, even among those who otherwise did not subscribe to Nazi ideology and simply viewed black music as a corrupting influence on the native concert tradition or on German culture more broadly.

²² Berndt Ostendorf. “Subversive Reeducation? Jazz as a Liberating Force in Germany and Europe,” *Revue française d’études américaines: Play it Again, Sim* (2001), 64.

²³ Michael H. Kater, “Forbidden Fruit? Jazz in the Third Reich.” *The American Historical Review* 94 (1989), 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

German critical theorist Theodor Adorno famously criticized jazz as disposable and commercial, although the music that he heard in Germany can only be called jazz with a broad and forgiving definition of the term. The German jazz bands of the era performed light marches and various dances like foxtrots, using the instrumentation of American jazz combos. Their music tended to lack the rhythmic vitality and improvisation that characterized early American jazz. Adorno heard the German dance band style and found it lacking; he later celebrated what he saw as inevitable government censorship of its tendencies.²⁵ In the later 1930s, Goebbels would seize upon the “Jewishness” of jazz, in large part due to the rise of Benny Goodman, and he launched prohibitions on the basis of its black and Jewish influence. Kater explains, “By 1937, in anticipation of the first climactic persecution of Jews during November of the following year, verbal assaults on jazz as a Jewish cultural by-product became more vituperative, without the black’s contribution being forgotten.”²⁶ The Nazis were unable to eradicate the music from Germany, much less any of the nations they occupied throughout Hitler’s time in power. In fact, the Nazis struggled to control musical trends in Germany and capitulated to the backlash that arose following the “degenerate art” denunciation of 1938. Pamela Potter explains, “Any attempt to limit access to the music met with such strong public resistance that the government retreated from its anti-jazz measures rather than risk evoking widespread discontent among Germany's growing number of jazz enthusiasts.”²⁷ Inconsistency in policy, which varied from region to region, and occupied

²⁵ The sort of jazz Adorno heard was produced under a very specific set of rules outlined by Nazi officials in charge of a given geographical area. These rules are detailed on page 31.

²⁶ Kater, “Forbidden Fruit,” 15.

²⁷ Pamela M. Potter, “What is ‘Nazi music’?” *Musical Quarterly* 88 (2005), 438.

nation to occupied nation, meant that Goebbels and his propagandists were unable to get the jazz craze under control.

Anti-Semitism was a powerful element of Norwegian culture, and Nazi officials attempted to appeal to Norwegians on the basis of Hitler's plan to eliminate Jews in positions of authority. Thus, many Norwegians did not resist Hitler out of a desire to prevent the expulsion and execution of Jews, but to preserve and maintain Norwegian cultural identity as it was being overtaken by Hitler's specific vision for a unified Aryan culture. A small contingent of Jewish citizens lived in Norway at the time of the occupation. An extreme minority in the Norwegian population, Jews had lived sporadically in the country since at least the fifteenth century after being granted refuge from greater persecution in Western Europe, but were subjected to a series of bans and expulsions from the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries. Many Jews escaped pogroms in Eastern Europe by taking up residence in Norway. A permanent Jewish community was settled in Oslo in 1892, and growth continued steadily, peaking at roughly 2,000.²⁸ That all ceased with the occupation, when almost every Jew in Norway was deported to a death camp, executed, or fled to Sweden. Some Norwegian Jews took refuge in England, where Haakon VII's government-in-exile was based. Beginning in 1942, the Nazis aggressively rounded up Norwegian Jews and sent the majority to places like Auschwitz. This left the country with a Jewish population near zero by 1945.²⁹

²⁸ "Jews in Norway: History," *Det Mosaiske Trossamfund*, http://www.dmt.oslo.no/no/joder_i_norge/historie/frem_til_1900/Den+fo%C3%B8rste+j%C3%B8diske+innvandringen.9UFRjK3Q.ips (accessed May 21, 2017).

²⁹ Few Jews opted to return to Norway after hostilities had ended. The Nazi occupation proved successful in mostly eliminating the Jewish population of Norway, and their numbers in the country continue to decline.

At the time of occupation, collaborators within the Norwegian government betrayed many Jews to the Nazis, and even local police officers assisted the occupying SS forces in hunting down Jews who were unable to leave the country in time. Nonetheless, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center recognizes 41 Norwegian citizens as Righteous Among the Nations, gentiles within the resistance movement who assisted Jews in hiding or fleeing from Nazi officials, often at great personal risk.³⁰

As a result of Norway's standoffish relationship with the Jews, little information about any perceived "Jewishness" in the Nazi suppression of Norwegian jazz of the occupation years is available.

Joseph Goebbels devised a plan to scrub jazz, at least its American incarnation, from the German airwaves, beginning with restrictions first enacted in 1935. Nazi regulations created a style of music that was acceptable for dances and other social occasions provided it met certain aesthetic criteria and explicitly avoided specific musical traits. The music that emerged from these restrictions bears no small resemblance to the lively-but-square foxtrots, cakewalks, waltzes and other ragtime-influenced dance music popular in Weimar Berlin, played a bit too fast and with instrumentation resembling a New Orleans-style combo.³¹ Consequently, a German pseudo-jazz appeared, with its most obvious African American elements watered down or stripped away completely. State-sponsored dance bands repurposed American swing standards for Nazi propaganda purposes.

³⁰ "The Righteous Among the Nations: Names of Righteous by Country," *Yad Vashem: World Holocaust Remembrance Center*, <https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/statistics.html> (accessed June 12, 2018).

³¹ This incarnation of jazz is the music that Adorno had famously decried as excessive and devoid of emotional depth.

A list of jazz's characteristics as redefined in the Nazi image reads like a parody of the music's roots and early qualities. Czech political activist and writer Josef Skvorecky's novel *The Bass Saxophone* contains a preface with a comprehensive list of the regulations for jazz as issued by the Nazi's regional culture authority, a man known as a *Gauleiter*:

Pieces in foxtrot rhythm (so-called swing) are not to exceed 20% of the repertoires of light orchestras and dance bands;

In this so-called jazz type repertoire, preference is to be given to compositions in a major key and to lyrics expressing joy in life rather than Jewishly gloomy lyrics;

As to tempo, preference is also to be given to brisk compositions over slow ones (so-called blues); however, the pace must not exceed a certain degree of allegro, commensurate with the Aryan sense of discipline and moderation. On no account will Negroid excesses in tempo (so-called hot jazz) or in solo performances (so-called breaks) be tolerated;

So-called jazz compositions may contain at most 10% syncopation; the remainder must consist of a natural legato movement devoid of the hysterical rhythmic reverses characteristic of the barbarian races and conducive to dark instincts alien to the German people (so-called riffs);

Strictly prohibited is the use of instruments alien to the German spirit (so-called cowbells, flexatone, brushes, etc.) as well as all mutes which turn the noble sound of wind and brass instruments into a Jewish-Freemasonic yowl (so-called wa-wa, hat, etc.);

Also prohibited are so-called drum breaks longer than half a bar in four-quarter beat (except in stylized military marches);

The double bass must be played solely with the bow in so-called jazz compositions;

Plucking of the strings is prohibited, since it is damaging to the instrument and detrimental to Aryan musicality; if a so-called pizzicato effect is absolutely desirable for the character of the composition, strict care must be taken lest the string be allowed to patter on the sordine, which is henceforth forbidden;³²

³² This reference to the sordine (mute) is an error on the part of the Gauleiter, who evidently meant to write fingerboard.

Musicians are likewise forbidden to make vocal improvisations (so-called scat);

All light orchestras and dance bands are advised to restrict the use of saxophones of all keys and to substitute for them the violin-cello, the viola or possibly a suitable folk instrument.³³

As an example of the type of restrictions that were in place in occupied countries, this list of regulations clearly illustrates Nazi sentiment towards jazz. Those characteristics deemed “degenerate” could be spun as an embodiment of Aryan ideals by utilizing approved Germanic musical techniques as a substitute for the grievous African American and Jewish traits. These prohibitive notions extended readily to the occupied countries, but Goebbels’ failure to fully eradicate the music from cultural life meant that it could take on new life as both music of resistance and music that reinforced the regime’s goals. To leverage the power that jazz had over the European imagination at this time, the Nazis needed a “diluted form of swing that was considered sufficiently Aryan and non-American.”³⁴

The Nazis soon began to grasp the propaganda potential of jazz as its popularity continued to rise in spite of their restrictions. Regime-sanctioned dance bands began to appear, which bore only a superficial resemblance to their American counterparts. Instrumentation for the “model dance band” proposed by radio propagandist Fritz Pauli consisted of a dozen violins, four violas, a couple of brass instruments (typically a trumpet and possibly a trombone, both uncorrupted by the distorting effects of mutes), a

³³ Josef Skvorecky, *The Bass Saxophone* (New York: Ecco Publishing, 1999), ii.

³⁴ Ralph Willett, “Hot Swing and the Dissolute Life: Youth, Style and Popular Music in Europe 1939-49,” *Popular Music* 8 (1989), 157.

bowed string bass, drums, and of all things, a zither.³⁵ Saxophones were strongly discouraged, if not outright banned, in many cases. As instruments of French origin embraced by black and Jewish musicians, the saxophone family was singled out by the Nazis as degenerate and accordingly restricted.³⁶ To the heads of the regime, and many of the musicians who adopted the instrument, the saxophone, long considered suspicious for the lascivious tone it could produce, “*was jazz, its wail of abandon symbolizing the free style of life with which jazz was associated.*”³⁷

The saxophone had a long history of disturbing autocrats both political and musical, its creator Adolphe Sax facing ridicule, scrutiny, and assassination attempts when his new instrument family was introduced, and these associations never declined in certain circles. An account by a German critic witnessing a saxophone ensemble in France in 1867 discusses the instrument in “coarse, loud, and primitive” terms, and the author “acknowledges the players’ virtuosity, but worries about the damage such proficiency on such gross media might do to the subtler dimensions of the composer’s art.”³⁸ Nazi authorities famously used a caricature of a black musician wearing a Jewish star holding a saxophone in official *Entartete Musik* propaganda. This image was

³⁵ Mike Dash, “Hitler’s Very Own Hot Jazz Band,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/hitlers-very-own-hot-jazz-band-98745129/?no-ist> (accessed May 31, 2017).

³⁶ Joseph Stalin held a similar attitude towards the saxophone, taking issue with both its French roots and its early use as a “novelty” instrument that contributed to its association with capitalism, Western excess, and disposable culture. As a result, Russian military wind bands did not employ saxophones until well after Stalin’s death. During the Stalinist regime, saxophone parts in works by composers like Ravel were eliminated or passed to other reed instruments. After World War II, a successful purge of Russian saxophonists saw many musicians arrested and imprisoned, with a notable event from 1949-1950 being the summary firing of all of the saxophonists in the Soviet Radio Committee Orchestra. See Stephen Cottrell’s history of the instrument, *The Saxophone*, pp. 325-326.

³⁷ S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2004), 42.

³⁸ Mike Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon: Europe’s Reinvention of Jazz* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 27.

modeled on the cover of the piano score to Ernst Krenek's 1927 opera *Jonny spielt auf*, appropriated to associate the saxophone with “enemies” of the German people.

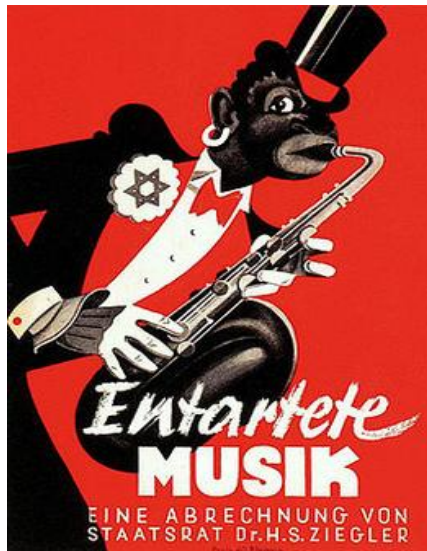


Figure 1. Propaganda poster advertising a Nazi exhibition of “degenerate art” in Dusseldorf, 1938. Designed by Ludwig Tersch. Caption translates to “A reckoning by state council Dr. H.S. Ziegler.”³⁹

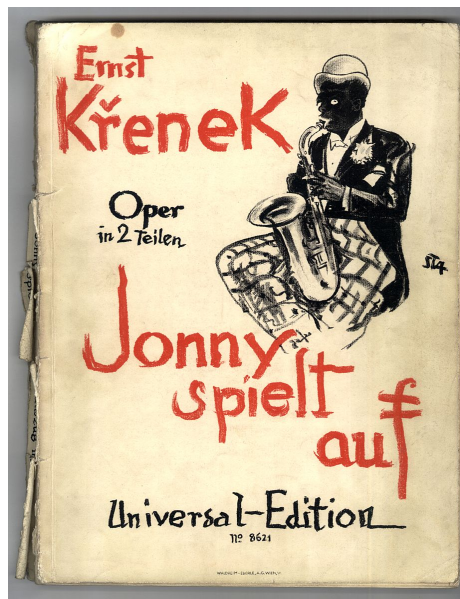


Figure 2. Arthur Stadler's artwork for the piano score cover of Ernst Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf* (“Jonny strikes up”). Public domain image.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ludwig Tersch, *Entartete Musik* poster (1938). Image reproduced under fair use.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Entartete_musik_poster.jpg

⁴⁰ Arthur Stadler, *Jonny spielt auf*, first edition piano score (1928). Wikimedia Commons,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Krenek_Jonny-spielt-auf_Titel.jpg

As Stephen Cottrell notes, “The saxophone continued to function as a symbol of racial difference” following the official edicts towards jazz, and the image of the black Jewish saxophonist “would have reinforced for many the image of the saxophone as a disreputable and potentially threatening instrument, if found in the wrong hands.”⁴¹

These model dance bands, suitably stripped of saxophones and brass mutes and well-schooled in the polished, uniform style of white dance bands, performed for state-sanctioned radio broadcasts, playing the Goebbels-approved ersatz swing acceptable at the time, with their programs typically preceded by a patriotic military march or a Wagnerian opera overture; the overture to *Tannhäuser* was especially popular. In some occupied nations, like France, the regime’s representatives opted to “accept the current popularity of jazz but...appropriate it through its disputed origins.”⁴² This lent an air of legitimacy to the restrictions and musical changes imposed on the music under Nazi decree, crediting several elements of jazz to European creators and deliberately downplaying any African or American influence. The melodic invention of jazz, according to this official view, could be traced to the work of the innovative New German School of Romantics headed up by Franz Liszt. “Even Debussy was seized upon as a precursor by reason of his cake-walks.”⁴³

This intentional rewriting of the music’s origins served a valuable propaganda purpose, elevating the sanitized German interpretation to more prominence and simultaneously underscoring the Nazi notion that black art was inherently degenerate,

⁴¹ Stephen Cottrell, *The Saxophone* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 324.

⁴² Willett, “Hot Swing and the Dissolute Life,” 161.

⁴³ Ibid.

derivative, and devoid of genius. Particularly in France, occupation authorities took great pains to rewrite the history of jazz in the image of European creativity.⁴⁴

The idea of a “model dance band” spread throughout occupied countries and one soon appeared in Norway, where it took on a similar role to state-sanctioned German bands. The official regime newspaper advertised performances by a jazz orchestra led by Heinz Webner, “a German swing musician who had been sent to Norway in 1941 to organize a jazz/dance orchestra for the Nazified broadcasting company.”⁴⁵ Webner’s group was permitted to advertise their music as “jazz” despite official Nazi sentiments towards the word’s use; in Norway, “swing” was the far more egregious term thanks to its associations with Americanization. Webner’s orchestra provided music for the radio broadcasts of the occupation government. Newspaper advertisements touting the group appear as late as 1944, well after the Nazi crackdown on the Norwegian swing scene.

In Germany during the 1930s, jazz, or “swing music” as it was known, had been adopted by a resistance element known as the *Swingjugend*, youths who deliberately dressed, spoke, and behaved in emulation of hip and cool American idols and readily embraced and promoted swing music in defiance of the official Nazi denunciation. Many of these groups existed in large German cities, but they were only affiliated with one another in name and spirit. In Hamburg, a particularly large group of *Swingjugend* made their presence known and efforts to crack down on their antics were especially aggressive. The group’s name was a riff on *Hitlerjugend*, the infamous Hitler Youth.

⁴⁴ This appropriation recalls statements by cornetist Nick LaRocca, of Original Dixieland Jazz Band fame, who tarnished his legacy by claiming that black musicians learned to play jazz from listening to his all-white group. LaRocca’s comments are best understood as an attempt to salvage some measure of fame after failing to profit from the incredible popularity of swing music in the 1930s. See Richard Sudhalter’s *Lost Chords: White Musicians and their Contributions to Jazz, 1915-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴⁵ Stendahl and Bergh, “Sigarett Stomp,” 19.

Some of these young people even welcomed friends with a mock salute and “Swing Heil!” A similar youth swing culture appeared in many occupied European nations at this time, including Denmark, Poland, and France. The eventual size and prominence of the *Swingjugend* left the Nazis with no choice but to monitor their activities. These young people mocked the regime’s totalitarian tendencies and, notably, often refused to become members of the Nazi party’s official youth organizations such as the Hitler Youth and its counterpart for young women, the League of German Girls.⁴⁶ As a result, many members of these “swing cliques” (as the Nazis derisively called them) faced arrest and reprisals.

In Norway, there is no concrete evidence of an organized youth swing organization, but the music was nonetheless equally popular with the same age group and enjoying it constituted, along with simply listening to the radio, a subversive act.⁴⁷ “In the context of Nazi antipathy towards the music,” writes Ralph Willett, “swing took on the force of a political statement, nowhere more so than in the occupied nations where, as in Germany itself, it was forbidden to listen to foreign radio stations.”⁴⁸ When the occupation began in 1940, there were 25 jazz clubs in Norway, many of which were forced underground in the later years of the occupation as Nazi repression grew ever more zealous. However, the number of jazz clubs actually increased in the first year and a half of occupation, and demand for the music had never been higher. In their comprehensive jazz history of Norway, Bjørn Stendahl and Johs Bergh note that the Norwegian jazz scene was flourishing prior to the onset of hostilities, and that “for jazz musicians the war came at a very inconvenient time, in the middle of what seemed to be a

⁴⁶ *Swingjugend* members nicknamed the state-sanctioned League of German Girls quite pejoratively as the “League of Soldier’s Mattresses.”

⁴⁷ Norwegian citizens were forced to surrender their radios to occupation officials or risk arrest and imprisonment. The occupation government also censored and restricted newspapers.

⁴⁸ Willett, “Hot Swing and the Dissolute Life,” 158.

golden age for jazz music.”⁴⁹ This interruption would shape the direction and future of Norwegian jazz.

Norway was primed for a creative flourishing of jazz. At the start of the war, the swing styles associated with Americans such as Benny Goodman, and string swing, which featured small groups fronted by a violin, were popular. Norwegian big bands of the occupation years were commonly made up of four saxophones, two or three trumpets, one trombone, and a rhythm section.⁵⁰ Most Norwegian cities of decent size had at least one permanent swing band, often backed financially by a social club or a swing society, but they enjoyed primarily local followings. “In smaller ensembles,” notes James Dickenson, “the preferred New Orleans playing style, where individual virtuosity took second place to the overall blend of the group, seems in retrospect much nearer to the Scandinavian concept of jazz ensemble than the more extrovert New York style, with its individual showcasing of soloists.”⁵¹ This small group model was commonplace throughout Norway. Norwegian musicians retained this emphasis on group interaction and collaboration well into the 1960s and 1970s, where the concept was a guiding principle of Norwegian free jazz experimentation. This dynamic of collaboration is discussed in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Permanent big bands of around eleven or twelve musicians could be found in most large Norwegian cities, including Stavanger, Kristiansund, Trondheim, and Bergen. The majority of these bands did not tour; touring bands became increasingly rare as the war continued. One exception was the Bergen Rhythm Orchestra, known for its brass

⁴⁹ Stendahl and Bergh, “Sigarett Stomp,” 18.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁵¹ Dickenson, “Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz,” 46.

section, which toured the country in 1942. Recordings were the primary means for Norwegians to connect with jazz, and as the war began musicians learned from the recordings they could obtain. American recordings grew scarcer as hostilities progressed. Records were imported from America alongside other genres of music and in some cities demand could be quite high. A local market began to grow as well. Norwegian record labels released recordings of local groups as early as the 1930s, and the “string swing” style dominated the homegrown output. This style was modeled on the French “hot club” music popularized in the 1920s in Paris cafes, but many Norwegian recordings showcase a style with loose connections to a broad range of genres. “The variations over the melodies were simple, rhythm was often syncopated, and new orchestral colorations were achieved through the use of saxophone, banjo, drums and various novelty instruments. On the whole, however, the music was adjusted towards the European ‘salon’ music of the day.”⁵² The record market was jarred at the onset of Nazi occupation. “American records (on German labels) were still imported, but melody titles in English were strictly forbidden...local Nazis had taken direct charge of the concert programme in order to hamper the free expression of swing sentiments.”⁵³ Since most of the music recorded by Norwegian groups to that point utilized English titles, many tunes were rechristened and rereleased under the auspices of Nazi approval. A tune like “Tiger Rag” might be warped into “Animal Waltz” after an awkward translation.

This early suppression of Norwegian attempts at cultivating a jazz identity came at a time when the dominant model for these musicians was American swing, and the European jazz idiom was strictly imitative. Any attempts to parse out a distinctive local

⁵² Bjørn Stendahl, “Jazz in Norway 1920-1940,” *Norwegian Jazz Base*, http://www.jazzbasen.no/jazz_eng.php?side=jazzhistorie_eng.html (accessed October 8, 2016).

⁵³ Stendahl and Bergh, “Sigarett Stomp,” 22.

color from these American-inspired bands would have been thwarted by the Nazi restrictions and their attempted censorship of references to the music's American origins. The relative scarcity of recordings, exacerbated by further restrictions on their sale during the occupation, limited their influence to a narrow stylistic spectrum. Recordings were not the only way for Scandinavians to experience jazz in the years leading up to the war—Louis Armstrong had famously performed in Sweden in 1933, and a large number of American musicians had visited Scandinavia by 1940— but recordings were an important touchstone despite their paucity. Even the American-style jazz that was eventually practiced in secret had been, by this time, so denatured by propaganda restrictions that Norwegian musicians could never quite know what they were attempting to imitate unless their recordings pre-dated the Nazi invasion. These musicians were thus at a distinct disadvantage when it came to developing an indigenous expression of jazz until well after the war, and the occupation, had concluded.

Some jazz clubs were permitted to remain open, but others were subject to the whim of the local *Gauleiter* and could be shut down without notice.⁵⁴ In addition, the Nazis now demanded that any social societies and clubs register with the occupation government. Upon learning that women's sewing and knitting groups did not have to register under the new regulations, "some of the Oslo jazz clubs disappeared overnight – only to reemerge as 'sewing circles.'"⁵⁵ This underground scene only grew larger as the war progressed and the Nazis more aggressively enforced their cultural restrictions,

⁵⁴ *Gauleiters* were Nazi officials in charge of a regional geographic area, initially corresponding to each of the German states (such as Saxony). Adolf Hitler handpicked the *Gauleiters* who oversaw the administrative regions of occupied nations, and only NSDAP *Reichsleiters* ranked higher in the party paramilitary hierarchy. *Gauleiters* were responsible for setting and enforcing official party doctrine towards education, the arts, the press, and business in the occupied regions.

⁵⁵ Stendahl and Bergh, "Sigarett Stomp," 19.

particularly as the Wehrmacht began losing ground on the Eastern Front. “Jazz people had every reason to fear that their clubs would be subject to severe and unreasonable restrictions or even banned from the scene,” write Stendahl and Bergh. “Most of the clubs from then on went undercover or maintained a secret existence.”⁵⁶ As the occupation progressed past its first year, Nazi efforts to squash jazz in Norway would grow more pronounced, and recordings more difficult to obtain even with the existence of a black market.

“The summer of 1942 was to become the temporary climax of the rhythm era. At that time more than 30 clubs were in operation – swing music was everywhere. But the authorities’ restrictive policies proceeded with undiminished force.”⁵⁷ By this time, the occupation government’s pursuit of jazz had begun to disrupt the lives of Norwegian jazz musicians, forcing more of them underground or to Sweden. The state-sanctioned, sanitized version of jazz permitted under Nazi regulations was much more strictly enforced, with any remaining American influence stripped out of the Norwegian incarnation. “From this year on official jazz performances also seemed to take on a more polished character.”⁵⁸ The Nazis banned public dances in March of 1942 and were now set on thoroughly disciplining the Norwegian music scene. The local leadership had begun to distrust Norwegians *en masse*, and discouraged the public from assembling in large groups. This coincided with a new crackdown on public concert life. Stendahl and

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Bergh note that these “Nazi ideologies were on the offensive” in the fall of 1942, and a “Great Court of Culture...openly denounced jazz, Jews, plutocrats and Bolsheviks.”⁵⁹

The association of jazz with public – and therefore, decadent and suspicious – activity became a core part of Nazi pressure against musicians throughout Norway, as “classical musicians were told to keep away from public concerts.”⁶⁰ Concerts consisting solely of “rhythm music”—the preferred term for Norwegian swing—were rare by late 1943. Those jazz musicians who remained in Norway often found themselves working as entertainers in stage shows and silent movie theatres, only able to practice their version of swing underground. A handful of music journals dedicated to jazz enjoyed small circulation in Norway in the early 1940s; by 1943, these had been shut down, and even short mentions of jazz in Norwegian media were rare enough to be noteworthy.

“Culturally,” writes James Dickenson, “Norway found itself lying more in the direction of the USA and Britain than it had before the outbreak of hostilities...some twenty years were to elapse after the cessation of hostilities before the news from Sweden about the folk-jazz movement reached home.”⁶¹

Following the winter of 1943, and after months of increased Nazi pressure and restrictions, the tenuous position jazz held in public Norwegian life collapsed, and musicians and listeners were forced to practice the music in secret. “Jazz disappeared—for the most part— from the surface,” and musicians and aficionados were openly persecuted, with two of Oslo’s highest-profile jazz musicians sent “to the slammer after

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Dickenson, “Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz,” 55.

showing jazz movies illegally at an Oslo cinema theatre.”⁶² One, Rowland Greenberg, was a trumpet player who formed one of Norway’s first great swing groups in 1939 and consistently ran afoul of occupation authorities.

He was born in Oslo in 1920 to a British father, and has been described as the most influential young Norwegian jazz musician of the 1940s. Greenberg, who had toured England with George Shearing, spent a year at Grini prison camp, established outside of Oslo to hold political and intellectual dissidents, musicians, and artists. His debut record release was banned in occupied Norway, as it contained English titles, and was not released in his home country until after the war. Greenberg performed alongside Miles Davis and Charlie Parker at the 1949 Paris Jazz Festival, and went on to tour Sweden with Parker in 1950, but he is still well known in Norway for his defiance towards the authorities as a stalwart of Oslo’s swing scene. In the latter part of the occupation, a few Oslo-based big bands were able to produce new material and even tour. The only remaining prominent outlets for “rhythm music” were Nazi-sanctioned dance orchestras attached to broadcasting companies and music provided as entertainment for German officers and their dates at “official” clubs and theatres.

Some jazz musicians in Norway found that aligning with the occupation government brought them steady work. State-sanctioned entertainment and media created a need for musicians, and there were those who capitulated to the regime’s artistic proclivities for the promise of a paycheck. Most of the remaining steady gigs could be had with the official radio orchestras, which upheld an appearance of normalcy even as Germany was losing ground in central Europe. Norwegians watched as the Germans used

⁶² Stendahl and Bergh, “Sigarett Stomp,” 23.

scorched-earth tactics in the northern part of the country in a last-ditch effort to escape the Russians. As the end of the war approached, Bergh and Stendahl note, the promise of liberation began to influence the music. “Around New Year 1945, everybody had come to understand that it was only a matter of time before the war would be over. Swing music was given slightly freer reins, musicians started practicing again – everybody was preparing for a time when jazz would pour out to the joy of a musically starved population in the outskirts of a world war.”⁶³ Norway had preserved a tiny piece of its nascent and burgeoning jazz identity that was primed to flourish after the war.

Of the many deep wounds left in the Norwegian psyche by World War II, collaboration was particularly painful and opened rifts between friends and family members that continued to fester after the war was over. Lawsuits were filed against local Nazis and those viewed as traitors, with some in artistic circles demanding justice for those involved with the occupation government. The Norwegian Musicians’ Union wanted to investigate those musicians who were seen as performing under questionable circumstances and test their loyalty “in compliance with democratic principles of justice.”⁶⁴ “Several jazz and dance band musicians had played in ‘dubious’ places,” write Stendahl and Bergh, “but they were defended by most of their colleagues, both then and later.”⁶⁵ When the war ended, musicians emerged from hiding and celebrated the end of occupation in Bergen with jazz, where, on May 8, 1945, “trombone player Mikal Kolstad

⁶³ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

had already gathered a 17-piece outfit for an outdoor concert.”⁶⁶ Norwegian jazz emerged from the underground to follow a new path.

While jazz was finding footholds on the fringes of Norwegian society under Nazi rule, the armed resistance movement kept the occupation government busy. A group of Norwegian commandos famously sabotaged a key component of the Nazi nuclear program, destroying a stockpile of deuterium that was slated for use in building atomic weapons. The Nazis retaliated against resistance activities by executing civilians. The Norwegian people, however, continued a campaign of civil disobedience that would have major ramifications for literacy, art, and culture. The occupation force spent outlandish sums of money trying to inhibit the spread of the many underground newspapers that were distributed in major cities like Oslo; these illegal publications often contained reprinted Allied news items originally broadcast on the radio, particularly the BBC. This collective disobedience extended to the underground music scene, with increased participation in communal singing, particularly of religious hymns. The nation began an underground process of reconnecting with its folk culture.

The Norwegian craving for their own cultural touchstones contributed to a strong desire for community that invigorated certain artistic circles, including Norwegian concert music. “They gathered in churches, in meeting-houses, or in private homes to hear leading artists present music or literature. These concerts were often camouflaged in the advertisements as some other event – ‘prayers,’ for example.”⁶⁷ The concerts mentioned were not simply concert music or underground jazz sessions. Surreptitious

⁶⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁷ Arvid O. Vollsnes, *Ludvig Irgens-Jensen: the life and music of a Norwegian composer* (London: Toccata Press, 2014), 205.

folk singing was a popular activity at these underground music gatherings.⁶⁸ Singing traditional Norwegian songs was a risky maneuver since, as with jazz-related activities later in the occupation, participation could result in arrest and confinement in a labor camp.

Keynote Recordings, a New York City-based record label, offered a curious release in 1942: a three LP collection called *Fighting Men of Norway: Norwegian Songs of Freedom*, with a cover image of a Viking ship bearing the monogram of Norwegian King Haakon VII.⁶⁹

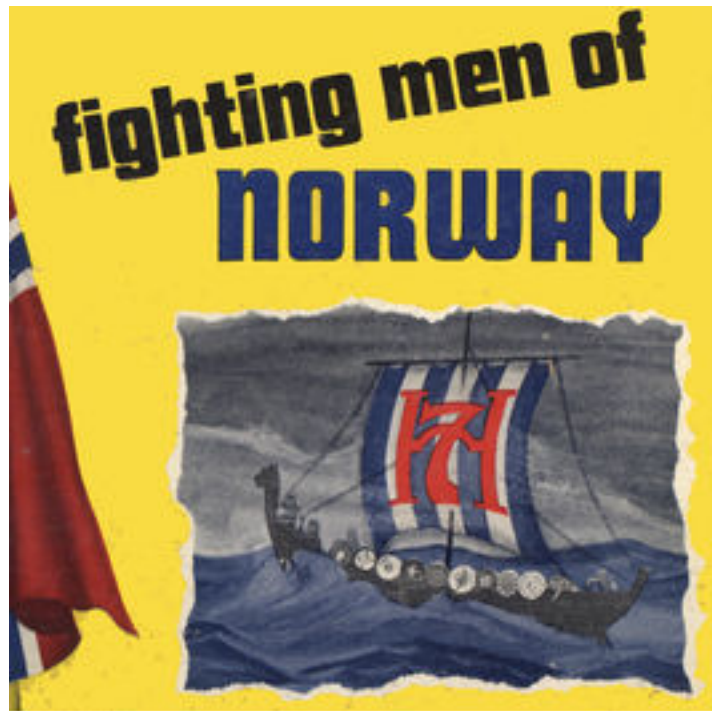


Figure 3. LP cover of Keynote Recordings' *Fighting Men of Norway*.

⁶⁸ The later incorporation of folk music into Norwegian jazz is one of the characteristics that lent this style of jazz its Nordic flavor, and the resurgence of folk singing came at a time when jazz was struggling under occupation rule.

⁶⁹ Members of the Norwegian Resistance adopted the king's monogram as a symbol of their struggle against Nazi rule while the king himself was exiled in England. Photographs taken during the war show resistance fighters displaying the emblem on their jackets. A diary entry from a Norwegian resistance fighter describes seeing "Long Live the King!" inscribed on fences in the countryside and along cross-country skiing trails. See Stokker, *Folklore Fights the Nazis*, 74.

The album contains a version of the Norwegian national anthem, as well as several patriotic songs and traditional tunes with titles like “Alt For Norge” (“All For Norway”) and a version of the traditional Lutheran hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” performed by the chorus of the Zion Norwegian Lutheran Church. Joining the church choir on the album is the “Agnes Ford Keynote Orchestra,” a group that appears to have been the house band of the Keynote label. The label was established in 1940 and specialized in recordings of a political and patriotic nature, “including such fighting song packages as ‘Red Army Chorus of the U.S.S.R.,’ ‘Songs of Free China,’ ‘Songs of the Yugoslavian Guerrillas,’ and ‘Freedom Sings’ featuring the Spanish Republic Army Chorus and Orchestra.”⁷⁰

One selection from the album, “Hjemmefrontens Sang” (“Song of the Home Front”), is based on a traditional folk tune and references the struggles of freedom fighters against Nazi occupation during the 1940s. The song is a jaunty, upbeat number with the dotted-rhythms of a drinking tune and rousing tutti passages for the male singers. The liner notes explain that this tune “became the song of the Underground Army carrying the fight inside Norway.”⁷¹ This record, released during the height of the Nazi occupation, is a snapshot of the politicization of Norwegians during the war and the role that folk culture played in resistance to occupation. Keynote Recordings’ producers openly expressed Communist sentiments and most of the label’s early output was overtly leftist and antifascist in nature. Such a record was one way to rally Norwegians (and

⁷⁰ Jeff Sauve, “Collections Up Close: ‘The Fighting Men of Norway.’” *Newsletter of the Norwegian-American Historical Association* 149 (Spring 2013), 10.

⁷¹ Liner notes, *Fighting Men of Norway: Norwegian Songs of Freedom* (New York: Keynote 114), 1942.

Norwegian Americans) to defend their homeland and Norwegian identity despite Nazi appeals to a shared sense of “Aryanness.”⁷²

⁷² The leftist leanings of Keynote Recordings resulted in an investigation of the label by the United States House Un-American Activities Committee during its 1950s Communist purge, and the label later revamped its image and lineup by dropping their politically subversive offerings and focusing solely on anthologies of swing and trad jazz. Bebop and trad jazz grew more common in Norway at least five years after the end of the occupation, in large part because imported recordings were already scarce even when not subject to restrictions. It took close to a decade for the Norwegian recording market to stabilize.

Chapter Three: Sounding Modernism

Norway was no less susceptible to the modernist signifiers of jazz than any other European nation. “Jazz,” writes Berndt Ostendorf, “could be used as a strategic instrument to mark the secession from the older European culture.”¹ At a time when many Norwegians were actively resisting the cultural and spiritual, as well as physical, occupation of their homeland, the modernist cast of jazz was especially powerful, dressed in trappings of progress and advancement.

Modernism began to take root in literature, art, and music during the waning nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, and was a fully formed movement by the 1930s. Modernism was associated with the avant-garde – indeed, it was the pre-existing condition for the development of a musical avant-garde – and the artistic quest to say something new. More broadly, the avant-garde was a spirited reaction to the rapid technological and social advancement of society that coincided with the Great War, and the strong rejection of the past that came in its wake. As Modris Eksteins describes it, “The notion of *modernism* [*sic*] has been used to subsume both this avant-garde and the intellectual impulses behind the quest for liberation and the act of rebellion.”² Jazz had many connotations of modernism for Europeans, with Stuart Nicholson noting how “jazz modernism in Europe began with the emergence of pre-jazz forms such as the Cakewalk [*sic*] and Ragtime [*sic*], yet does not begin in the United States until the beginnings of bebop in the 1940s.”³ Other scholarship has explored the modernist tinges of jazz as it emerged during the Harlem Renaissance and in the music of Louis Armstrong, arguing

¹ Ostendorf, “Subversive Reeducation,” 61.

² Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), xv.

³ Nicholson, *Jazz and Culture in a Global Age* (e-book)

that swing was regarded as an expression of American modernist values by the late 1920s. For many white Americans, this music was largely popular entertainment until bebop began to shed the more commercial features, but in places like 1920s Paris, “jazz was immediately embraced as an aspect of modernism, an art form in its own right that seemed to parallel several strands of modernism.”⁴

For authoritarian governments, such an intellectual thread was unwelcome in the social tapestry. The Nazi party openly ridiculed modernism, citing jazz as an example of the corrupt influence of the movement, and Hitler’s desire to usher in a “thousand-year Reich” was rooted in notions of historical German exceptionalism. It follows that the flagrant rejection of the past so crucial to modernist thought would pose a substantial threat to the idealized Teutonic order. To embrace modernist art during the peak of the Nazi regime was itself a subversive activity; performing it and espousing its virtues could lead to denunciation and persecution. The European interpretation of jazz as “modernist” was a component of the Third Reich’s virulent hatred towards the music, but the modernist qualities of jazz were also the source of the music’s seductive appeal for those opposed to the regime. Its exoticism and sensuality introduced new aesthetic principles “at the gates of Western culture whose door keepers react by strengthening its cultural defenses with a strong dose of racism.”⁵ For many practitioners of modernist art, the movement was a calculated response to the breakdown of the old European hegemony and a rebellion against any established order. Though specific modernist techniques assume different guises within different art forms, the influence spread rapidly after the collective trauma of World War I. In no uncertain terms, the survivors of the Great War

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ostendorf, “Subversive Reeducation,” 56.

rejected the models of the past that had led, in their eyes, to virulent nationalism and destruction. “In the quest for a new fluency and harmony was involved a profound rebellion against an older generation, against the fathers who had led their sons to slaughter.”⁶

Ostendorf, himself a German who was five years old when the Soviets rolled into Berlin, has written about the liberating power of jazz in Germany and the rest of Europe. He identifies the music as “a truly Western child of Modernism [*sic*],” and finds modernist qualities in “the jazz session, an ephemeral happening in which creation and reception, composition and performance become one. This experience of unity-in-performance explains why jazz was so attractive to the Modernist avant-garde in literature and the arts.”⁷ Another, albeit more cringe-worthy aspect of modernism lay in its infatuation with the “primitive”: unspoiled, uncorrupted genius never touched by European influence. Well into the 1930s, critics (particularly those in Europe) referred to Duke Ellington’s distinctive orchestration as “jungle music,” a moniker derived both from the modernist worship of primitivism and the heavily stereotyped surroundings of the Cotton Club, Ellington’s musical home in Harlem, where the waitresses wore loincloths and fake palm trees flanked the stage. These stereotypes of black American culture were pervasive during the peak of modernist ideals. In 1920s Paris, a popular nightclub known as the Plantation featured “murals of Mississippi steamboats and ‘darkies.’”⁸ American popular culture came to represent for Europeans all of the energy and newness of modernism,

⁶ Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 259-260.

⁷ Ostendorf, “Subversive Reeducation,” 57.

⁸ Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 268.

So obvious in the cultural artifacts, forms, and personalities that America exported, whether they were Hollywood's epics or slapstick comedies; ragtime, jazz, or the Charleston; bobbed, cigarette-smoking, gin-swilling flappers; exotic sensualists like Josephine Baker; or hard-living expatriates like Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald.⁹

As a result, anti-modernists, traditionalists, and authoritarians reacted to the “Americanization” of Europe with chagrin and censorship. To the elites of Europe, American culture—with jazz as its primary export—was the essence of modernism, a fusion of radical new approaches to art and the primitive, unspoiled, untutored aesthetic so prized by cultural tastemakers.

As music with African American roots, jazz held real appeal for modernists who embraced the “noble savage” trope common in places like France in the early decades of the twentieth century. When American entertainer Josephine Baker debuted in Paris in 1925, she did so wearing nothing but a skirt of dangling bananas, performing the “Danse Sauvage” for an audience at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Baker went on to become the most popular American entertainer in France, and her act continued to draw from various stereotypical images of Africa that enthralled Paris audiences. The energy and libidinousness with which Baker performed was not unique. The “hot” rhythms and freewheeling style of early jazz captivated French listeners, leading to the publication of *Le Jazz Hot* magazine beginning in 1935, one of the first publications on any continent to feature jazz exclusively. In time, the music began to take on strong connotations of resistance to the social order and reflected a modernist primitivism; though this phenomenon began in earnest during the 1940s, it was quite clearly on display in the writings of some European critics as early as the late 1910s. Ingrid Monson opines that

⁹Ibid.

“consequently, the cultural theme linking jazz musicians with rebellion, modernism, and primitivism cannot be confined to a history of bebop in the forties; neither, however, can it be detached from the history of the genre.”¹⁰ Of the many meanings attributed to jazz throughout its history, its utility as a means of resistance and reinvention is one of the most important.

French conductor and critic Ernest Ansermet first wrote about the musical characteristics of jazz in 1919 on the occasion of saxophonist Sidney Bechet’s visit to Paris. Ansermet raved about the power of the music, but underscored his words with a racial subtext that reflects the fascination with the primitive that was taking root in France. His review connects the music to the signifiers of African American culture with which he had become familiar. Ansermet discusses jazz techniques such as syncopation, describing the style as “the desire to give certain syllables a particular emphasis or a prolonged resonance,” as well as the blues-derived melodic practice that “pushes the Negro to pursue his pleasure outside the orthodox intervals: he performs thirds which are neither major nor minor and false seconds, and falls often by instinct on the natural harmonic sounds of a given note...no written music can give the idea of his playing.”¹¹ In his account of Bechet’s performance, Ansermet describes the young musician as “an extraordinary clarinet virtuoso who is, so it seems, the first of his race to have composed perfectly formed blues on the clarinet,” and insists that the “strongest manifestation of the racial genius lies in the blues.”¹² Ansermet’s account of Bechet’s improvisation describes the “richness of invention, force of accent, and daring in novelty and the unexpected”

¹⁰ Ingrid Monson, “The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48, no. 3 (1995), 413.

¹¹ Ernst-Alexandre Ansermet, Robert Gottlieb, ed. “Bechet and Jazz Visit Europe, 1919,” *Reading Jazz* (New York: First Vintage, 1999), 744-745.

¹² *Ibid.*, 746.

displayed by the musician.¹³ Europeans equated improvisation with all that was modern; by its very nature jazz improvisation often involves some sort of introspection or examination of self (a modernist value) through a real-time musical narrative and is, by definition, ephemeral and unique to each performance. Ansermet's conspicuous excitement at witnessing Bechet's mastery in person informed later European observations of African American musicians and played a key role in the continuing "jazz musician as unaware modernist" trope, and we must remember that Ansermet was viewing Bechet through this lens.

For Ostendorf, the improvisational spontaneity of jazz— genius on demand—also carried a strong connotation of the primitive: "The 'primitive' or spontaneous composer radicalizes the act of composition. He must imperatively innovate in a seemingly spontaneous fashion."¹⁴ Connecting this feature with the eventual repression of jazz under fascist regimes, Ostendorf further contends that Nazi dismissal and fear of jazz is rooted in this spontaneity and a palpable sense of freedom. Jazz, he insists, "is essentially anarchistic, though never undisciplined. This liberating groundbass [sic] is one reason why jazz has not fared well in totalitarian systems. In fact, it is a sort of litmus test for exposing authoritarianism and fundamentalism."¹⁵

Indeed, joining the Nazis in their rejection of jazz were American Christian fundamentalists, school boards, and Joseph Stalin, with the music being accused of representing both vile Communist intentions and perverse capitalist indoctrination, or the debauched and illicit lifestyle associated with black Americans. Breathless editorials in

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ostendorf, "Subversive Reeduction," 58.

¹⁵ Ibid., 59.

publications like *Ladies' Home Journal* warned parents of the disobedience and drug use jazz could inspire in young people. Ostendorf recognizes this phenomenon as “the fundamentalist international clearly recogniz[ing] the liberating potential, the subtly subversive power and seductive charm of jazz – particularly for the young.”¹⁶ All of these qualities gave jazz a modernist tinge that provoked strong reactions from these assorted ideological factions. These characteristics were only negative in the eyes of the authoritarians; novelist Ralph Ellison and many of his contemporaries viewed modernist art as a way to find and express freedom in the face of tyranny, and to this end, jazz was an ideal expression of these characteristics.

When black intellectuals began reshaping jazz discourse in the 1940s, many white critical assumptions were claimed, reexamined, and refashioned to address new musical expressions such as cool jazz, modal jazz, and bebop, which would ultimately evolve into free jazz. Free jazz as pioneered by saxophonist Ornette Coleman was conceived as a rejection of the influence of traditional Western music on jazz. By liberating jazz from the conventional formal strictures of European music, Coleman was expressing dissent in a way that would shake the foundations of jazz and ripple outward to touch a young generation of avant-garde musicians in West Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. The impact of Coleman’s thinking and his influence on the Nordic sound is discussed in Chapter Five.

In Norwegian jazz after World War II, the stage of creativity shifted from one of assimilation, the regional expansion of the ideas Norwegians learned from American recordings that began just as the Nazis put an end to the flourishing Norwegian jazz

¹⁶ Ibid.

culture, to a profound new emphasis on innovation. American jazz musicians began to visit Europe in larger numbers, making many stops in Scandinavia and invigorating the growing scenes there. Oslo, Stockholm, and Copenhagen were popular destinations for John Coltrane, Don Cherry, and other experimental figures of the late 1950s. In some cases, these American musicians spent several years in Scandinavia working with local artists. This exchange led to a free embrace of avant-garde ideas on the part of the Europeans, and a willingness to practice the kind of collective creativity emphasized by Ornette Coleman, as elucidated below.

A series of student and worker's movements swept through Europe in the late 1960s, and the full flowering of the Nordic sound can be traced to that time. The process of collaboration and collectivity by Norwegian jazz musicians took on a deeper meaning in the aftermath of Nazi occupation and regulation, stretching into the decades after the war. A conceptual groundwork, laid in part thanks to the explorations of American musicians in Scandinavia beginning in the 1950s, would prove fundamental to the Norwegian free jazz explorations of the 1960s and 1970s. The adolescence of Norwegian jazz, taking place as it did under these conditions, would prove just as fraught as any period of teenage angst; ultimately, these social and cultural factors were crucial in the 1960s maturation of Norwegian jazz.

By the early 1950s, most contemporary styles of jazz—swing, bebop, and Dixieland—had penetrated the Norwegian consciousness due to expanded offerings of recordings and visits from American practitioners. In Scandinavia generally, post-war residencies of George Russell and Quincy Jones were, according to James Dickenson, “of

central importance in the formative years of a Scandinavian jazz tradition.”¹⁷ Russell’s presence is notable for the dissemination of his Lydian Chromatic Concept throughout Scandinavia, and for his tutelage of a young saxophonist named Jan Garbarek, who later embodied the essence of Norway through his searching, introverted improvisations. Trumpet player Don Cherry, also known for his work with free jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman, practiced a style of jazz that would come to be known as “world jazz” or “ethnic jazz” and was associated predominantly with Garbarek as well as other musicians like Arild Andersen and Terje Rypdal. “The compositional techniques used by Andersen and Garbarek were test-driven in the workshops of Russell in Stockholm and fine-honed in Norway as individual careers developed and opportunity allowed.”¹⁸

Several musicians that worked with Russell—Andersen, Garbarek, Rypdal, and drummer Jon Christensen—formed a group that crystallized the Nordic sound on the vaunted ECM record label. These musicians also recorded with a stable of Americans, including guitarist Ralph Towner, whose 1974 album *Solstice* was recorded for ECM Records in Oslo with Norwegian sidemen, including Garbarek. Garbarek also made notable recordings with American pianist Keith Jarrett on the ECM label, but has occupied a niche in the arena of “ethnic jazz,” generously informed by Norwegian folk music, since the 1970s.

American jazz musicians have frequently remarked on the responsiveness of European audiences to the more experimental aspects of their performance. Some American musicians found great success and artistic enrichment in Europe and preferred working there. It is worth examining European jazz from this perspective, as differences

¹⁷ Dickenson, “The Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz,” 86.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

in temperament between American and European audiences, real or imagined, are a factor in the music's popularity. Europe was noted for its positive reception of jazz innovation, which often translated into better working conditions for musicians. This reputation had been building since expatriate musicians like Sidney Bechet first reported on the European scene in the 1920s. "Europe had become an important market for American musicians, who either went on tours from the USA, or settled down for some years, preferably in Paris. Coleman Hawkins was one of them, visiting Oslo in May 1935 with his 'lush golden saxophone,' playing at the Bristol under the leadership of conductor Willy Johansen."¹⁹ Many African American musicians commented on the racial dynamics in Europe, noting that they found greater social and musical acceptance among Europeans, particularly in Scandinavia.

George Russell's own move to Scandinavia was triggered by his discouragement over race relations in the United States. He lived in Sweden and Norway for five years, touring with his various groups, many comprised principally of Norwegian musicians, and teaching his theories. By the late 1960s, musicians had taken note of the European scene's enthusiastic embrace of experimentation and new musical frontiers. In 1962, trumpet player Don Ellis spoke to *Down Beat* on the state of affairs in Europe, reporting, "In Stockholm, we were treated like royalty...the musicians I recorded with were very sympathetic to the 'new thing' and impressed me with their natural feel for it (and we recorded several pretty wild things)."²⁰ Ellis went on to comment on the musicality of his European collaborators, praising drummer Daniel Humair, a Frenchman whom Ellis

¹⁹ Stendahl, "Jazz in Norway 1920-1940."

²⁰ Don Ellis, "News," *Down Beat* 29 (December 20, 1962), 13.

claimed “cuts most of the U.S. drummers.”²¹ “If Mel Lewis heard him [Humair] when he was here,” Ellis continued, “I don’t see how he could make that statement in *Down Beat* about European drummers sounding like Gene Krupa.”²²

Baritone saxophonist Sahib Shihab, a popular sideman for big band recording sessions in New York, settled in Copenhagen in the early 1960s and had previously toured most of Europe with Quincy Jones and his band. “I had to leave the States before I became too cynical,” Shihab told *Down Beat* writer Jack Lind in 1963. Lind describes Copenhagen as a popular “temporary home for jazzmen who for various reasons want to get away from the hurly-burly of the U.S. scene.” Shihab was more critical of European musicians than Don Ellis, telling Lind, “It’s a mixed pleasure working with Scandinavian musicians. A few of them are very good, but a good many of them are indifferent...some of these people don’t have much of a feeling for jazz.” Shihab conceded that European audiences seemed especially receptive to the music he performed, noting, “I think Europeans appreciate music more than in the States. They have a longer tradition, and the musicians are trying to learn.”²³

Down Beat magazine’s 30th anniversary issue, published in 1964, contains a discussion of the American expatriate scene in Europe. Saxophonists Dexter Gordon and Leo Wright participated in a roundtable discussion of their experiences in Europe, in which they pondered the closure of American jazz clubs after World War II. Dexter Gordon spent many years in Copenhagen and found appreciative audiences in Europe, commenting, “I think the European audience is more ‘inside.’ They are not listening off

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Sahib Shihab, quoted in Jack Lind, “Sahib Shihab’s Expatriate Life,” *Down Beat* 30, no. 7 (14 March 1963), 17, 43.

the top. They are listening to the emotions, the modifications...they've got a very different outlook about everything...not just music."²⁴ Saxophonist Leo Wright, who spent time in Austria and Germany, commented on the aesthetic changes he had witnessed in jazz during the 1950s, and the subsequent reactions by American and European audiences. For him, the extroverted showmanship of American jazz had grown obnoxious. "A lot of us fail to be musicians," Wright told Jack Lind in 1964:

They let people play horns from the other end and anything that is supposed to be a spectacle but has nothing of the profound essence... it can be controversial, but my music – the music people call jazz – was never meant to be confusing music even when Diz and Bird and Monk got together. That was new music. They got on the stand and blew – and they made their point, in time. Why? Because there was a certain amount of this profound essence attached to what they were doing, and it was just a matter of time till it would catch on.²⁵

Wright continued, engaging in a back-and-forth with Paris-based pianist Kenny Drew about the new modernist approaches to American jazz. "We have had many experiments in jazz...some have lasted and some have failed. Now why?" Wright postulated. Drew offered, "The ones that failed – there was no essence there." Wright concurred, responding, "That's my point exactly. Now the people here in Europe...those who are jazz fans...they feel this and understand this because they know how to look at a thing. They know how to look at a picture and listen to music, folk music...how to look at a sculpture, and they first try to seek out the essence of this thing. That is why they can enjoy it."²⁶ Jack Lind stated, "It seems that when they [Europeans] come into a club, they see an American, and they say, 'Oh boy, he's got to be good – he's American...and if

²⁴ Dexter Gordon, quoted in Jack Lind, "Americans in Europe, A Discussion," *Down Beat* 31 (1964), 67.

²⁵ Lind, "Americans in Europe, A Discussion," 66.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

he's an American Negro he's got to be even better.' That seems to be a European type of thinking about jazz." Dexter Gordon agreed, adding, "Yeah, the European attitude is that it is the American who can play jazz, and particularly – if not totally – the American Negro. I've found this to be the case all over Europe."²⁷

These anecdotes support the commonly held notion that Europe's audiences were more open and receptive to these musicians and allowed them experimental latitude that was not as enthusiastically received in the United States. Perhaps the postwar European clamor for African American musicians is an artifact of the modernist fascination with jazz that gripped the continent before World War II, as well as the musical prowess attributed to the black musicians who had created the music. By the late 1950s, the new experiments in jazz improvisation spearheaded by Ornette Coleman and his colleagues were beginning to trickle into European discourse, first through recordings, then through the expatriate American musicians who spread these new techniques throughout Europe. This new tradition took root most strongly in the Scandinavian countries.

²⁷ Ibid., 68.

Chapter Four: (Re)defining Jazz

In Philip Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino's 2016 publication *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*, the authors admit that the timing of their book coincides with "a substantial remodeling of jazz scholarship through a seemingly necessary cultural critique of the jazz traditional canon...the opening toward the 'jazz of the others' and the establishment of the New Jazz Studies."¹ *Jazz Worlds* is an in-depth exploration of how jazz has found various niches throughout the world and has enriched and influenced music making from Italy to Iran. Research on "outsiders," those musicians who are separated in some way from the stereotypical cultural environment of jazz—whether non-American, female, or LGBTQ—has flourished in recent years and offers an opportunity to critique the culture of jazz from a variety of methodological perspectives. In the preface to his analysis of the studio recordings of the Miles Davis quintet, Keith Waters agrees, noting that "Jazz studies has profited considerably by recent intersections with cultural studies. Such enterprises focus on jazz as a process that emerges from larger musical, social, and cultural relationships, and celebrates jazz as a collective endeavor."² Despite the conventional approach to jazz history that primarily emphasizes the genius of individuals—the "great men of jazz" trope—this new approach has deeply enriched our understanding of the art form, revealing jazz as a process of cooperation and collaboration that is best understood through improvisation.

One of the challenges of this approach to jazz studies is the paradox generated through surveying the contemporary field: how can jazz have global reach—seemingly

¹ Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino, "Introduction," *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 8.

² Keith Waters, "Preface," *The Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet, 1965-68* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), x.

all things to all people, a genre that is popular throughout the world—and yet adopt local dialects, as it has been shown to do in numerous regional and national scenes? How can jazz, a style of music defined by several particular musical characteristics, shed many of those characteristics and reinvent itself outside of the boundaries of its birthplace? When jazz histories are written, the space or the place hosting the music becomes a part of the music itself, a regional definition of musical tendencies shaped by the culture of a “scene” and refined through group interaction and identity formation. For Norway, this notion of place feeds a powerful national image that has made its way into the overall aesthetic and even the marketing of jazz.

Much of the contemporary analysis of jazz proceeds from cultural inquiries prompted by other disciplines, including gender studies and racial studies. Jazz ethnographers like Paul Berliner and Ingrid Monson examine the process of jazz, forming an ethos for jazz performance practice that is nonetheless inextricably linked with the music’s cultural roots. Monson in particular emphasizes “interpretation of the African American way of jazz musicianship, or in other words focus on the ‘black’ inside perspectives of American jazz life.”³ The literary theories of black intellectuals also play a prominent role in study and dissection of jazz in the present day. The markers and attributes of jazz performance, some of which have become familiar tropes that inform the popular image of jazz in mass media, are intimately bound up with the black culture from which they emerged. Musicians have, at various points, downplayed or exploited these connections, both in North America and Europe. As the roots of jazz and its performative elements can be traced to black American culture, how can it be that jazz

³ Tor Dybo, “Ethnomusicological Reflections on Challenges in Norwegian Jazz Research,” *9th Nordic Jazz Conference* report (Oslo: Nordic Jazz Conference), 138.

might emerge in an entirely new (European) context where this black cultural expression is nonetheless still intact? Recent research attempts to answer these questions, considering how a new national identity can coalesce around culturally and geographically distant music while attempting to define the signifiers and markers of a European jazz conception.

Jazz musicians often remain rooted to the places they originate and develop, learning and performing in a style linked geographically: for example, Count Basie and his Kansas City swing, or the Chicago associations of Bix Beiderbecke, not to mention the New Orleans heritage of the music. Yet, the well-traveled among them brought new ideas to be nurtured in new places. How, then, can music that frequently defies boundaries and categorization be codified according to notions of region and place? How does jazz cross borders and take shape in new lands? What are the political contexts for jazz's development in these new lands, and how are these borne out in the construction of national, regional, and local jazz identity?

Of the major regions of Europe, Scandinavia—Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, and Norway—has demonstrated a particularly robust jazz culture since the late 1950s. Each country's jazz displays its own national characteristics, yet remains rooted to a fundamental aesthetic concept known as the “Nordic sound;” a number of watershed recordings on the German record label ECM helped to codify both this sound and the label's relationship to a broader Scandinavian aesthetic. Jazz critic Stuart Nicholson attempts to define its qualities, writing that “the Nordic tone avoids the ‘external,’ the patterns, the favorite licks, the quotations, and extroverted technical display of much of contemporary jazz, and instead zooms in close to deeply felt melody, exposing tone,

space, and intensity.”⁴ This poetic image associated with Scandinavian jazz can be observed in a variety of musical traits such as timbre, but also reflects the cultural position of jazz in each individual country. Musical signifiers help to shape the popular image of a nation, and the nation shapes these musical signifiers.⁵

Recent scholarship has seen a vigorous interrogation of the word “jazz” itself, which came under renewed fire as jazz studies expanded while collaborating and adapting the analytic tools of other disciplines. Many African American musicians remain hostile to the term, believing it to be reflective of white identity politics and mass marketing gone awry. “Scholars who invoke the word *jazz* [sic],” notes George E. Lewis, “are certainly aware of the contention, disapprobation, and downright denial that the term continues to provoke across generations of African American musicians.”⁶ The history of the word is as complicated as the music itself, and has had different meanings in different contexts. This may have roots in the negative connotations surrounding the word “jazz” in the music’s early decades, when it was synonymous with vice and moral decay. As the music itself changed during the 1930s and 40s, the word gained more traction as a marketing term but was typically linked to popular swing, which distanced jazz from its improvisational and spiritual roots.

Bebop musicians like Dizzy Gillespie and Max Roach rejected the word and reshaped their music in resistance to the white-dominated big band model of the era.

⁴ Stuart Nicholson, *Is Jazz Dead?: Or Has it Moved to a New Address* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 198.

⁵ A recent visual and storytelling trend in popular culture has been dubbed “Nordic Noir” by critics, referring to the cold, gritty aesthetic of the wildly popular *Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* novel and film series, Danish television series *The Bridge* and *The Killing*, as well as the films of Scandinavian auteurs like Ingmar Bergman. The aesthetic is well represented in popular music by Icelandic singer Björk and Icelandic tone poets Sigur Rós, artists who utilize distinctive rhythmic and timbral techniques that share some overlap with the jazz tendencies discussed below. The bleak, austere, clinical imagery invoked by Nordic Noir is frequently on display in Scandinavian jazz.

⁶ George E. Lewis, “Foreword,” *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*, xii.

Hard bop trumpet player Lee Morgan once told an interviewer that the word had been forced on black musicians in much the same way his race had been forced to accept the word “Negro.” “If you ask me what would I call our music,” Morgan told Valerie Wilmer in 1971, “the best thing I’d come up with would probably be Black Classical music. But then, that’s even a broad term.”⁷

There have always been tensions surrounding the term and its usage. “The word,” writes Mike Heffley, “of course, has been invented and reinvented all along, like the music it tags, always controversially.”⁸ Nonetheless, the term “jazz” has been broadly adopted all over the world, reflecting dozens of styles and subgenres. For better or worse, it is embedded in the cultural fabric of worldwide music, and efforts at renaming the genre, such as “Postmodern New Orleans Music,” have failed to take hold.⁹ Complicating the debate over the word itself is the distorted legacy of jazz as evangelized by traditionalists such as Wynton Marsalis and his institution, Jazz at Lincoln Center. This view advances a narrow definition of jazz that asserts American hegemony and territorial dominion over all other interpretations. Lewis describes this phenomenon as “ongoing attempts in the United States to export origin narratives that advocate and even demand exclusive fealty to American models; one example is Ken Burns’s documentary series *Jazz* and its near-total exclusion of non-US movements.”¹⁰

⁷ Lee Morgan, interview by Valerie Wilmer. New York City, 1971. Audio from *I Called Him Morgan*, documentary film, 2017.

⁸ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 2.

⁹ This term was coined by trumpeter Nicholas Payton in a series of blog posts on his personal website in 2011. Payton attacks the notion of genre and the continued use of the word “jazz” to describe music that he contends died in 1959. He offers a few new terms as replacements, including “Black American Music.” <https://nicholaspayton.wordpress.com/2011/11/27/on-why-jazz-isnt-cool-anymore/>

¹⁰ George E. Lewis, “Foreword,” xi.

In the United States, various institutions preserve and advance this narrative. Marsalis has been at the forefront of this movement since his rise to prominence in the 1980s, when further battle lines were drawn between traditionalists and progressives as jazz education became ubiquitous in American schools.

One of the priorities of Marsalis's "Young Lions" generation was a renewed emphasis on hard-swinging styles of the past, often inflected with the harmonic language of the post-modal generation. A great deal of the music they recorded can be considered "hard bop," but it is commonly called "post bop" to refer to the 1980s reincarnation of the 1940s bop aesthetic. This group of musicians evangelized only a particular polished, virtuosic, swing-driven style.

Wynton Marsalis represents a wing of the jazz pantheon who stake their fame on being what Mike Heffley calls "jazz-politically correct voices," and he cites "Stanley Crouch, Gary Giddins, Marsalis, magnified by Ken Burns" as the most vocal of this group.¹¹ Marsalis has more or less appointed himself America's foremost authority on jazz. Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns offered Marsalis a prominent role in his PBS film *Jazz*, and this position of influence gave Marsalis an air of influence on all matters pertaining to the jazz tradition.

For Marsalis, jazz originates with the New Orleans sound of Louis Armstrong and ends roughly around Miles Davis's forays into fusion. In this view, free jazz is egregious because it dispenses with the influence of the blues and more closely resembles European improvised music, and is therefore not fit to bear the jazz name. "Not only is Marsalis endlessly willing to declaim on what jazz is, but he's also not shy in deciding what it is

¹¹ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 6.

not. He is famously dismissive of jazz's turn to the avant-garde in the 1960s and beyond."¹² Marsalis's lofty position as the most commercially visible jazz musician in America potentially influences jazz educators and young musicians. According to Andrew Leonard, whose article is reproduced in full on Marsalis's official website, and Marsalis himself, "His conservativeness is actually an expression of faith in classic jazz's essential *modernism* [sic]. This is a modernism quite different than what we think of as 'avant-garde.'"¹³

Most telling, Leonard points out, "For Marsalis, the whole idea of the avant-garde is an unnecessary European import, the result of European artists struggling under the weight of their classical patrimony. It completely misses the essential breakthrough that defines jazz." These are intriguing statements that nearly position European free improvisers as adversaries, since, according to Marsalis's view, "It [avant-garde jazz] completely misses the essential breakthrough that defines jazz. That improvisational structure? That collaborative coming together? Those are crucial modern breakthroughs."¹⁴ Such "collaborative coming together" and the improvisational structure of communication are hallmarks of the free jazz style as practiced in Norway since the late 1950s.

The Marsalis view of jazz history excludes vibrant, impactful creative movements throughout the world that are worthy of study. They are a testament to the flexibility and innovation that are the hallmarks of jazz throughout its history. Canons like the one

¹² Andrew Leonard, "The Mad and Maddening Genius of Wynton Marsalis," *Monterey County Weekly*, http://www.montereycountyweekly.com/news/cover_collections/the-mad-and-maddening-genius-of-wynton-marsalis-gets-to/article_0109ee10-5cc7-11e5-93f8-5bb6e75cd498.html (Accessed November 10, 2018).

¹³ Leonard, "Mad and Maddening Genius of Wynton Marsalis."

¹⁴ Ibid.

constructed by Marsalis serve a valuable pedagogical purpose, particularly in the present day when the music labeled as “jazz” can be so diverse, but to deliberately undermine those innovative post-1960 genres and their advocates worldwide diminishes a full understanding of the genre. Marsalis, a native of New Orleans, lends authority to his stance by frequently invoking his hometown and lineage. As New Orleans is considered the “birthplace of jazz,” in his view, only jazz which remains linked to New Orleans through style or instrumentation is worthy of the term. While jazz may have an acknowledged (or idealized) birthplace, it cannot be tied to a single geographical place after decades of innovation and reinvention. Jazz that is created beyond the borders of New Orleans maintains some small tendril of connection to its forebear, but various innovations help to redefine the music in the new spaces it inhabits.

Jazz may have remained niche music, just another facet of American popular music history, were it not for the recordings that facilitated its global reach. Jazz has permanently transcended isolationist boundaries and can be viewed through more specific, regional lenses. European critics were some of the first to write about jazz in a way that assigned it value beyond its reputation as the music of American dance halls and brothels. These early critics observed that Europe was paradoxically more attentive than Americans to the creation known as jazz, which was often derided in its home nation, in part because of latent racial tensions. Surveying this literature, particularly in comparison with contemporary American perspectives, is illuminating in how it reveals the early bias implicit in American jazz discourse. White American writers active in the 1920s frequently “talked down” to jazz, or attempted to compare its musical features to the standards of European concert music (with, as might be expected, disastrous results).

Even Gunther Schuller's seminal work on the music of this era, *Early Jazz*, shoehorns jazz into the formal/structural model bequeathed to musicologists by the Western concert canon.¹⁵ Only in the 1950s and '60s were the problems of jazz scholarship confronted by African American critics and artists, with thinkers like Amiri Baraka leading the way. Jazz resists the sort of classification that Western concert music relies upon, and many have viewed the early comparisons as an effort to "legitimize" jazz through comparison to Western European conceptions of formal structure and harmony. Mike Heffley summarizes the scholarly progression as the tenor of jazz writing evolved during the twentieth century:

We have an American jazz discourse launched and shaped by French scholars; seized and reshaped, mainstreamed out of academia by European-American journalists and scholars; seized and reshaped again, still in that mainstream, by African American public intellectuals; adjusting its tack accordingly back on the French side; then shifting away from the public into more insular academic discourse, especially in (both black and white) America.¹⁶

The explosion of jazz discourse in Europe can be traced to early recordings, which arrived on foreign shores in the late 1920s. American jazz musicians caused sensations when they performed in Europe, and demand for recordings increased rapidly. The young medium of radio also played a role in the European jazz craze. However, a major factor in raising the international prestige of jazz was the work of music critics in Europe, many who wrote extensively about hearing live jazz and their subsequent fascination. Jazz was in the clubs, on the airwaves, and in newspapers and magazines as a controversial but significant cultural import. "European music critics in the 1920s," writes Heffley, "mostly French and English, woke Americans up to the value of jazz

¹⁵ Schuller's book was released in 1986, well after African American jazz writers had postulated other analytical models for the music.

¹⁶ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 5.

beyond its American contexts. They put a Western high-cultural stamp of approval on the music.”¹⁷ This echoes Stuart Nicholson’s curiosity about the modernist label as applied to jazz. Europeans immediately identified jazz as congruent with modernism, and their critics responded accordingly. While African American writers of the Harlem Renaissance explored similar ideas, white American jazz critics were slower to grasp this connection, and the American bebop-as-modernism critical trope was later obscured by the invocation of racial politics that were observed in the demeanor of bebop musicians from Dizzy Gillespie to Max Roach.

Heffley has argued that the European emancipation from American strictures represents a deliberate step outside of the marginalization that many Europeans felt in response to jazz, and a form of empowerment for a segment of European culture that did not identify with Western concert music. In a bold statement, he declares, “It was not so long ago that the northern Europeans themselves were the barbarians and outsiders to Western civilization. Wherever there is a classist hierarchy there is a subaltern voice, and if history had not made it a black one in America, the West would have invented another one (as indeed it did, several of them, in Europe).”¹⁸ Long histories of autocratic governments, poverty, religious turmoil, and peasant oppression in Europe provide just as deep a source for musical expression as the institution of slavery, and for Heffley, these European avant-garde musicians were mining that shared history using the African American model as a springboard. “Free jazz’s pioneers – first in African-American, then in European circles – asserted that empowerment more directly than did their

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

forebears.”¹⁹ Free jazz seemed uniquely suited to express a characteristically European point of view, although this was truer in certain countries than in others. Norway’s history as a country that has struggled for independence, only to face enemy occupation during a pivotal cultural moment, has rendered it particularly receptive to the notion of a regionalized jazz expression.

There are various musical characteristics that can be observed in the jazz tradition of Scandinavian countries. Sweden, Denmark, and Norway each have connected but distinct traditions, and have nurtured various scenes. Musicians in these countries reshape their national popular and folk musics, and jazz is a powerful tool for this purpose. Of particular interest are the musical and extra-musical elements (most notably, the album art associated with the ECM aesthetic, marketing concepts, and song titles that suggest Nordic imagery) that have fed Norwegian jazz since the 1960s. These include timbre, pitch class transformation, group interaction, and rhythmic flexibility/rubato. The type of jazz performed by Norwegian musicians in the 1960s and 1970s presents special analytical challenges; though it used African American jazz practice as a point of departure, “European jazz is now definitively understood as substantially different from its African American counterpart, and its histories must be narrated, as Wolfram Knauer suggests, on the basis of ‘the implications of local, regional or national aspects of the jazz development.’”²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid., 12.

²⁰ Bohlman and Plastino, *Jazz Worlds*, 8.

Chapter Five: Free Jazz: Collective Controversy

Jazz historians and critics have used the term “free jazz” to refer to the subgenre of jazz performance that first emerged in the African American jazz scene in the 1950s and 1960s. The terms “free jazz” and “avant-garde jazz” were used more or less interchangeably until the late ‘60s, when the stigma around the word “free” began to influence perceptions of the music. David Borgo notes that free jazz was “applied to avant-garde jazz of the 1960s and more generally to experimental performance approaches that were employed before and after that decade, ” but that “in the 1970s and 1980s many musicians preferred the label ‘avant-garde,’ since the word ‘free’ is misleading: in many instances their music is highly organized.”¹

By the 1970s, practitioners of a structured music, distinguished by deliberately breaking with mainstream jazz conventions and often drawing influence from experimental chamber music, had adopted the term “avant-garde” to encompass a variety of compositional, instrumental, improvisational, and philosophical approaches. Musicians and scholars have pivoted between “avant-garde” and “free” as the music has adapted and evolved. Borgo points out, “Free jazz is sometimes defined negatively, in terms of the conventional jazz features from which it may depart, including a reliance on tonal harmony, metrical rhythmic structure, sectional form, and standard jazz instrumentation, instrument timbres, techniques, and ensemble roles.”

¹ David Borgo, “Free Jazz,” and “Avant-Garde Jazz,” *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.ewu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002256589> (Accessed November 10, 2018).

The term “avant-garde jazz,” however, was ultimately abandoned because it obscured the connections between pioneers like Ornette Coleman and his many students and protégés, and because it ceased to define the practices of these musicians.²

The differences between the two styles are often subtle. Both generally refer to experimental practices in jazz performance. In free jazz, the momentary expression of the individual is elevated above all other musical priorities, and the traditional markers or signifiers of jazz performance— blues-based, cyclical forms and rhythmic inflections such as swing—are often absent. A deeply personal musical identity is constructed on the spot, with musical aspects like timbre deployed as new signifiers. Elements like timbre, motive and rhythm are shaped and re-shaped in a real-time dialogue among musicians, establishing the basis for form, orchestration, and pitch material. The conventions of the commercial swing era heyday, or the harmonic streams and cascades of notes characteristic of bebop, are largely avoided.

This break from jazz convention represented a revolution in music and black intellectual thought. Starting in the late 1950s, “jazz would fracture into a plurality of styles that challenged such received notions of jazz musicianship as centered tonality, a regular beat and tempo, bar divisions, conventional chorus structure, and improvisation based on chord changes.”³ The immediate critical reaction to this movement, particularly from mainstream jazz publications like *Down Beat*, was one of suspicion and often bewilderment. Even musicians as sacrosanct as John Coltrane were taken to task for their failure to abide by the music’s conventions. There was, John Gennari notes, “a widespread feeling among critics and listeners that the post-1959 avant-garde was an

² Ibid.

³ John Gennari, *Blowin’ Hot and Cool: Jazz and its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 253.

assault on the traditional jazz audience, a willful effort to deny listeners the pleasure of recognizable melody and rhythm.”⁴ Many black intellectuals, among them Amiri Baraka, looked to this radical departure from jazz norms as “a new paradigm of aesthetic value that required new modes of listening and engagement.”⁵ The “New Thing,” as this jazz came to be known, was at the center of the critical debate about structure and freedom in jazz performance. At this time, many white critics writing for *Down Beat* and other jazz publications also began to unpack the racial signification of this new movement. The politicization of the avant-garde and what came to be known as free jazz presented a challenge for critics.

Combined with the social turmoil and upheaval of the 1960s and the sudden foregrounding of civil rights in areas of musical discourse, this new musical approach caused deep discomfort among the old critical guard, with even stalwarts like Leonard Feather using terms like “militant” to describe the attitudes of avant-garde black musicians. British writer Philip Larkin declared that black musicians were engaged in an aesthetic war: “Men such as Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler and Archie Shepp, dispensing with pitch, harmony, theme, tone, tune, and rhythm,” Larkin wrote in 1970, “gave a keener edge to what they were playing by suggesting that it had some political relation to the aspirations of the Black Power movement. From using music to entertain the white man, the Negro had moved to hating him with it.”⁶ Broadly dismissive of the avant-garde, Larkin concludes his assessment of the “New Thing” with a flippant coda: “If jazz records are to be one long screech, if painting is to be a blank canvas, if a play is

⁴ Ibid., 254.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Philip Larkin, “All What Jazz?” Robert Gottlieb, ed. *Reading Jazz* (New York: First Vintage, 1999), 806.

to be two hours of sexual intercourse performed *coram populo*, then let's get it over, the sooner the better, in the hope that human values will then be free to reassert themselves.”⁷

A variety of reactions to these racially framed critiques quickly spread, particularly on the intellectual left. Some critics of the 1960s directly confronted *Down Beat* in particular for what was viewed as an “anti-black bias,” with *Jazz* magazine writer Frank Kofsky claiming a “reactionary bourgeois conspiracy against black nationalist influence” and accusing *Down Beat* of sustaining a “white supremacist status quo.”⁸ Free jazz and other avant-garde experiments were birthed out of the social and racial turmoil that so characterized the 1960s, just as the cultural and commercial elevation of whitewashed swing resulted in the creation of bebop two decades earlier.

Some black critics were quick to grasp the changes that were enlivening jazz discourse in the 1960s. Amiri Baraka's 1963 survey of black music and its origins, *Blues People*, contains a chapter on “The Modern Scene,” in which Baraka discusses the parameters and practitioners of the avant-garde. For Baraka, this new music is simply the logical continuation of a black American musical tradition that has always reinvented itself in response to the context in which it lives. For the leaders of the avant-garde movement, this meant reinventing the more primordial notions of jazz, those originating from Africa, in 1950s America. The musicians responsible, including Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, sought to “restore to jazz its valid separation from, and anarchic disregard of, Western popular forms...[they] restored improvisation to its traditional role of invaluable significance, again removing jazz from the hands of the less than gifted

⁷ Ibid., 809.

⁸ Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 258.

arranger and the fashionable diluter.”⁹ The breakdown of traditional jazz structure also prompts Baraka to look at this new music as an arbiter of the times: “the music has changed because the musicians have changed.”¹⁰ He recognizes that the constraints of both commercial and reactionary forms of jazz chafed against the ambitions and innovations of the new scene, noting that a break with conventional harmonic changes and jazz song structure seemed inevitable after the bebop era’s increased reliance on complex chains of chords.

“What Coleman and Taylor have done is to approach a kind of jazz that is practically nonchordal and in many cases atonal...their music does not depend on constantly stated chords for its direction and shape. Nor does it pretend to accept the formal considerations of the bar, or measure, line.”¹¹ Baraka is also keen to note elements of free jazz that eventually emerged in European practice: the emphasis of vocal-like timbres and utterances. Baraka calls it the “vocal reference that has always been characteristic of Negro music. Players like Coleman, Coltrane, and Rollins literally scream and rant in imitation of the human voice, sounding many times like the unfettered primitive shouters.”¹² For Baraka, these elements of the “New Thing” are bound up in black tradition and bear all the signs of their racial heritage, albeit in a way that confronts the cultural dominance of white-inflected jazz forms. Baraka’s response contrasts the

⁹ Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: William Morrow, 1963), 225.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 226.

¹² Ibid., 227.

“flurry of knee-jerk reactions, a struggle to cope with and define in jazz-traditional terms the music as it emerged” that so characterized the discourse of white critics.¹³

The newly foregrounded racial element of this experimental music, however, did not slow its spread throughout Europe; American critics wrestled with these implications while “European players quickly adopted the approach of free improvisation from its original African American context of protest and alternative to what they perceived as their own cultural situation.”¹⁴ George E. Lewis has written eloquently about markers of racial signification in free jazz performance, particularly when examining transcultural practices among improvisers. His additional work documenting the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and their brief collaboration with a European free jazz outfit in the late 1960s generously unpacks the racialized currents of improvised music as it appeared in the late 1960s. Lewis interrogates the adoption of the term “free improvisation” by some later European practitioners as a distancing from the word “jazz,” noting that the work of Derek Bailey, among others, asserts a dialectic between free jazz and free improvisation, with further interactive dynamics constructed between improvised music that is representational of an idiom or an element of memory (i.e. American jazz), and improvised music that claims to be fully modernist and divorced from signposts or markers. This supposed dichotomy emerged after attempts at a European nationalist jazz aesthetic deliberately whitewashed the degree of black influence. Lewis defines the Eurological movement:

¹³ Heffley, “Free Jazz: Left by American Parents on European Doorsteps,” *Academia.edu*, http://www.academia.edu/2316861/Free_Jazz_Left_by_American_Parents_on_European_Doorsteps (accessed August 2, 2017).

¹⁴ Ibid.

After 1950, composers began to experiment with open forms and with more personally expressive systems of notation. Moreover, these composers began to designate salient aspects of a composition as performer-supplied rather than composer-specified, thereby renewing an interest in the generation of musical structure in real time as a formal aspect of a composed work.¹⁵

Lewis additionally considers the definition of improvisation as interpreted by indeterminate composers such as John Cage. “The supposed difference between free jazz and free improvisation becomes disclosed as resting not upon methodological or sonic difference, but upon racial and ethnic identifiers that become mapped onto method in a way that...advances a whiteness-based version of the relationship between African-American improvisative culture and postmodernism.”¹⁶ The baggage accompanying the term “jazz” has figured into this distinction between Afrological and Eurological, with European musicians distancing themselves from the word for reasons apart from those cited by Max Roach and others. Lewis himself notes that European jazz musicians “successfully revised the identity (if not the commercial) discourse surrounding their work away from jazz in favor of more agnostic representations as ‘free improvisation’ and ‘improvised music.’”¹⁷ This is the stance most notably taken by Cage, whom Lewis credits, along with Morton Feldman and other representative avant-garde musicians, with “radically reconstructing Eurological composition...this reconstruction involved in large measure the resurrection of Eurological modes of real-time discourse.”¹⁸

Regardless of how the history of European jazz may have been shaped by European practitioners invested in asserting independence from American musical

¹⁵ Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950,” 215.

¹⁶ George E. Lewis, “Gittin’ to Know Y’all: Improvised Music, Interculturalism, and the Racial Imagination.” *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 1 (2004), 23.

¹⁷ Lewis, *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*, xvi.

¹⁸ Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950,” 220-221.

hegemony, free jazz as practiced in Norway was most certainly influenced by the African-American avant-garde. Once the free jazz movement, so controversial among American critics, gained further traction in Europe, musicians throughout that continent embraced the aesthetic and an abundant process of exchange began. Europeans “continued to collaborate with American free players, coming over time to provide the major source of performing and recording opportunities for many of them.”¹⁹ Norwegian musicians in particular began to branch out in new directions, rather than imitate the bebop movement that had arrived in Norway somewhat late due to the war and occupation. Yet, several notable African American artists influenced these Nordic musicians, and gave them license to craft their own indigenous expression that made sense in the context of 1960s social upheaval.

European free jazz practice began to acquire a national character, and a more self-consciously divergent path away from black American influences, in the 1970s, but initial European forays into free jazz acknowledged a debt to its Afrological traits. One of the Afrological characteristics identified by Lewis is memory. According to Lewis, the Eurological school of improvisers rejected the notion of both memory and history in music, preferring instead what they considered pure spontaneous sound that made no references to any pre-existing material or idioms, and that would never be repeated. In spite of this, writes Lewis, “The African-American improviser, coming from a legacy of slavery and oppression, cannot countenance the erasure of history...the rewriting of history and memory in the image of whiteness.”²⁰ The prominent European improvisers who found themselves at odds with Afrological values in improvised music were mostly

¹⁹ Heffley, “Free Jazz: Left by American Parents on European Doorsteps.”

²⁰ George E. Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950,” 233.

Germans working during the late 1960s and early 1970s. While they were attempting to redefine the practices of improvisation in favor of a Euro-centered modernist pedagogy, musicians in Norway continued to shape their jazz identity through a plurality of practices that would encompass both the Afrological and Eurological.

Lewis cites several criteria as indicative of an Afrological perspective. Among these are an emphasis on collaboration within a group of musicians and the celebration of “alternative” approaches and value systems, as well as a strong invocation of a musician’s individuality and personality through their improvisations. No less important is the idea that Afrological improvisation can function as a method of resistance to the dominant order, a notion embraced by Ornette Coleman (among others) when pioneering his break with the jazz conventions of the early twentieth century. Afrological improvisation relies on the distortion of time in some manner, with negotiation of a musical-temporal space important to the collaborative structure of the session. This is one of the most salient features of free jazz as practiced by Coleman’s groups and by the Norwegian school lead by saxophonist Jan Garbarek, as well as fellow countrymen like Carla Bley. A distinctive sense of place and space can be perceived in the work of several Norwegian musicians, particularly those that recorded for famed West German label ECM Records. Lewis’s cited characteristic of memory is one evoked prominently through the jazz of Jan Garbarek and others. This is discussed in greater detail in the forthcoming chapters. The early generation of European improvisers was fully aware of the work of African American experimentalists, and in some cases were directly mentored by them. These black American practitioners laid the groundwork for future

models exhibited in European countries under a broad European aesthetic, even if some efforts to distance from this model would prove stubborn.

Saxophonist and composer Ornette Coleman is credited with igniting the free jazz movement in the United States through several groundbreaking recordings released in the late 1950s and into the 1960s. His landmark 1961 recording, *Free Jazz*, features one large-scale collective improvisation. Free jazz “emancipates” several aspects of traditional jazz performance. Harmony was the first element to be discarded. Coleman’s early recordings conspicuously lack harmony instruments such as a piano, and even the string bass is not utilized on a functional harmonic-rhythmic basis. “Suppressed or absent harmonic function” releases the improviser from adherence to linear, teleological, tonic-to-dominant song models.²¹ Free jazz is broadly experimental and organized on more minute levels. Improvisation is the most significant feature of Coleman’s free jazz, but is not contingent on set or pre-established harmonies or forms. Gunther Schuller and Barry Kernfeld describe Coleman’s approach by warning the listener that “Coleman’s music cannot be understood solely in terms of the concept that has generally prevailed since the late 1920s – that jazz is primarily a form of expression for a virtuoso soloist.” While virtuosity in individual performance is certainly present in Coleman’s music, “It is conceived essentially as an ensemble music; founded on traditional roots, it makes consistent use of spontaneous collective interplay at the most intimate and intricate levels. This accounts for its extraordinary unpredictability, freedom, and flexibility.”²²

²¹ Keith Waters, *Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet*, 45.

²² Gunther Schuller and Barry Kernfeld, “Coleman, Ornette,” *Oxford Music Online*, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.ewu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J095200> (Accessed November 10, 2018).

Therefore, Coleman's music can be said to be truly "free," in that it liberates the musician from stock musical patterns or "licks," dispenses with traditional formal frameworks, and presents an opportunity for unfettered expression that is most often tempered and mediated by group interaction. Thus, it is a style of improvisation that emerges organically from collective dialogue and the assertion of personalities in such an interaction. "Improvisation is the language of jazz's intimacy, forged from conversations and mutual understanding, the sensitivity to the places in which performers join together."²³ This style of jazz downplays the extroverted displays of showmanship so common among the bebop generation; among free jazz improvisers, introspection and individuality are the goals. Coleman did not abandon the blues entirely, but he took what has been called an "idiosyncratic approach to the blues" that

Evoked a musical and real time free of Western meter and song form, recalling both the African *jali*'s (storyteller's) narrations to the freely streaming musical accompaniment of a stringed instrument and Western music's own developments of such instruments as accompaniments to voices speaking and singing both freely and in (poetic) meter.²⁴

Coleman's approach to his music was deeply informed by his own interest in the Civil Rights movement and his conceptions of humanity as a whole. Peter Townsend has drawn a connection between the democratic nature of swing music and Coleman's own views on the role of the individual within the group. In *Jazz in American Culture*, Townsend discusses David Stowe's comment that swing allowed an "individual voice to contribute to the collective whole...with the notion of a co-operative commonwealth

²³ Bohlman and Plastino, *Jazz Worlds*, 1.

²⁴ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 13.

central to Franklin Roosevelt's vision of America."²⁵ Charles Hersch has pointed out that Coleman's *Free Jazz* also expresses this vision of cooperation, albeit in a very different musical and social context, "combining unprecedented individual freedom with group coherence" and representing "a musical enactment of the ideas of freedom put forward in the growing civil rights [sic] movement."²⁶ Synthesizing these two perspectives on jazz as democratic ideal, Townsend concludes, "In both cases...the achievement of cohesiveness within the jazz ensemble is seen as realizing within its own domain ... the 'utopian potential.'"²⁷ This vision of a utopian future through enhanced musical communication formed a vital part of Coleman's philosophies towards his music. Townsend further quotes Hersch's take on Coleman's role in shaping this idea, writing, "despite the jazz community's eventual rejection of the 'Free Jazz' model, 'its performances show that the redemptive community is possible.'"²⁸

While Coleman is the figure most associated with American free jazz, the genre matured under musicians like Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, Thelonious Monk, and Charles Mingus; each contributed either a conceptual or musical notion to the broader avant-garde jazz movement. Coleman developed an idiosyncratic approach to his music that came to reflect certain priorities of the "New Thing." He disregarded concepts like standardized tunings and favored the spontaneity of ambiguous harmony and tonality. Coleman's resulting musical philosophy and compositional method was dubbed Harmolodics. This method strives to place musical elements like

²⁵ David W. Stowe, *Swing Changes: Big-band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 11.

²⁶ Charles Hersch, "'Let Freedom Ring': Free Jazz and African American Politics," *Cultural Critique* (Winter 1995-1996), 112 & 114.

²⁷ Townsend, *Jazz in American Culture*, 88.

²⁸ Ibid.

harmony, timbre, melody, and rhythm on more or less the same level, equalizing them so no one element is prioritized over another. Harmolodics, according to Coleman, is “the use of the physical and the mental of one's own logic made into an expression of sound to bring about the musical sensation of unison executed by a single person or with a group.”²⁹ Roy Haynes is given credit for a lovely summation of Harmolodics:

“everybody soloing; nobody soloing.”³⁰ Harmolodics works via Coleman’s distinctive concept of unison. A student of Coleman’s described how Coleman conceived of this “special kind of sound” and manipulated transpositions to achieve it:

Ornette drew brackets connecting F# to B flat, and A flat to C. Given the E flat transposition of the alto saxophone, a concert F# can be written as a B flat (or an A#) for the saxophone, and an A flat concert pitch for alto would be written as a C. This is what happens with a transposing instrument. Ornette has used the “two names for the same thing” as an abstraction for human rights. In Harmolodics, the A flat and the C form a “unison.” They have different names, but the same ultimate Sound in a mystical sense of the term. In Humanity, we all have different names, but share the same right to exist.³¹

Coleman has discussed this notion in interviews, maintaining that “the same twelve notes support all kinds of different performances – there must be something in those twelve notes that lets each individual be free.”³² This creative notion, one of many that Coleman exported to an eager Europe, liberated improvisers from the conventions of tonal harmony that had influenced their practice for decades and allowed for a new kind of unison and collaboration that could echo as a very real metaphor for human rights.

²⁹ Ornette Coleman, “Prime Time for Harmolodics,” *Down Beat* (July 1983), 54-55.

³⁰ Stephen Rush, “An Argument for a Harmolodic Approach to Jazz Instruction,” in *Free Jazz, Harmolodics, and Ornette Coleman* (London: Routledge, 2016), 68.

³¹ Rush, *Free Jazz, Harmolodics, and Ornette Coleman*, 68.

³² Ornette Coleman, quoted in Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz* (London: Continuum, 2001), 789.

The emphasis on individuality and personal expression in collaboration with other musicians is innate to Coleman's philosophy and the free jazz expressions of Norwegian musicians as well. In fact, a characteristic of both Norwegian free improvisation and Coleman's early free forays is the notion of an individual emerging through and because of the cooperation of a collective. Novelist Ralph Ellison, writing in his essay collection *Shadow and Act*, gives an excellent definition of this dynamic when he proclaims that "each solo flight, or improvisation, represents (like the successive canvases of a painter) a definition of his identity: as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition."³³ Coleman encouraged his musicians to communicate with intention, advising his fellow musicians "to use his tunes as igniters of their feelings, then to use those feelings rather than the rational plan of the composition to direct their improvisations...he systematically allowed for the phenomenon of group interaction in the process, including the group's power to go beyond the composer's parameters."³⁴

[Coleman] also believes that a line of music written on the page (or taught by rote) should mean something different to every musician. When Ornette realized that the same note on a music staff meant different notes on different instruments, he found a way to give everybody the same basic melody but have every musician be heard with their own emotion.³⁵

Individual meaning and purity of expression within the interplay of a collective group are thus fundamental to an organic free jazz approach, a notion that Norwegians have embraced. If conventional organizational principles are abandoned, other organizing functions must substitute. In the Norwegian tradition, this includes an emphasis on timbre, tone, and texture within a group framework, much like Coleman's initial

³³ Ralph Ellison, "The Charlie Christian Story," *Shadow and Act* (New York: New American Library, 1966), 229.

³⁴ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 43.

³⁵ Iverson, "Forms and Sounds."

Harmolodic experiments emphasized the distinctive sound of every instrument and its musician. As Heffley points out, Coleman's experiments liberated jazz consciousness: "He took African-American musical vernacular out of its European generative grammar and let it roam freely through his own personal roots and patches of rhythmic and melodic free association, some of them more African than American...some more his voice than anything else."³⁶ In France, one critic wrote of the movement sparked by Coleman as "the successful vision quest of a whole culture, the coming-of-age of African America into adulthood, an eschewal of Western 'training wheels' and a responsible, risky embrace of creative potential and power both musical and sociocultural: *freedom from impression, freedom to grow*."³⁷

Free jazz hinges on a collective approach to improvisation, where musicians work together to realize a group expression of sentiment or feeling, or a participatory dialogue or debate in which each individual asserts their own musical identity. Ornette Coleman's early work showcases this approach, with multiple musicians contributing to a fully realized musical work that only attains coherence through conversation. Stephen Rush explains that this new approach was necessary for Coleman, whose personal beliefs on human rights lead him to upend the traditional "changes" model of jazz education, which "does not address the inter-human dynamic, nor does it honor anyone but the so-called soloist. Worse, it puts the other members of the band in a subservient position. The non-soloing musicians are placed 'underneath,' as 'servants' in terms of function, power, and substance. Harmolodics disposes of that dynamic entirely."³⁸

³⁶ Heffley, "Free Jazz," 11.

³⁷ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 25. Italics in original.

³⁸ Rush, *Free Jazz, Harmolodics, and Ornette Coleman*, 66.

Musicians working in this manner must develop other strategies to coordinate their performance, as the traditional anchors for improvisation are no longer viable. Free jazz, due to its liberated nature, presents special problems in this area. To work together with other musicians, free jazz improvisers are forced to make decisions in performance that offer some coherence in context. The individual's contribution to the collective, and the friction of different personalities against each other, is what gives free jazz its energy, and the rawness of emotion can be unsettling. Free improvisers must develop and use a system of musical logic in real time that can coordinate diverse, experimental perspectives. Ingrid Monson has examined this phenomenon in her book *Saying Something*, urging scholars to reconsider jazz from a collective, rather than individualistic, point of view:

Since the late 1920s, when the extended improvised solo became one of the most prominent characteristics of the music, those fascinated by the beauty, power, and complexity of the jazz tradition have focused primarily upon the activities and achievements of individual soloists without considering the enabling function of the accompanist. Although the personal quality of the improviser – his or her magical projection of soul and individuality by musical means – has been rightfully at the core of what writers have wished to emphasize, the time has come to take a broader view of jazz improvisation and its emotional and cultural power.³⁹

Considering the human elements that factor into a realized jazz performance provides an opportunity to understand the role of the collective in supporting a soloist, and the kind of group dialogue for which Coleman's free jazz groups became known. For example, rhythm section musicians "generate stylistic grounding for soloists and offer continuous rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic ideas that might contribute to soloists'

³⁹ Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1.

explorations.”⁴⁰ They are the linchpin for solo improvisations, providing the context and backdrop for a soloist to express something in dialogue. The context for performance is also vital in the behavior and activity of the collective. Nathan Bakkum summarizes the work of Monson and Paul Berliner in this realm, noting, “interaction takes place squarely within well-defined stylistic boundaries...performers are ultimately constrained by the collective knowledge regulated by participants in the scene.”⁴¹ However, one goal of the free jazz movement was to break through some of these constraints in order to change the musical product. The means and methods of communication in the moment of performance, particularly a “free” performance, can greatly modify the resulting music. While jazz ensembles are composed of particular hierarchies, one of the goals of Coleman in doing away with harmony instruments was to eliminate this notion of hierarchy to foreground the contributions of everyone in the group, regardless of their stereotypical jazz role. In a liberated, non-hierarchical jazz collective, musicians employ a variety of strategies to coordinate a performance with some coherence, reinventing the context as they go. To accomplish this, they must respond sensitively to the subtlest statements made by the other musicians. In some cases, traditional rhythm section instruments, such as bass and drums, assume the role of leader within the dialogue, subordinating the melody instruments and reversing the traditional roles.

Clement Canonne looks to game theory as a foundation for analyzing this type of collective coordination: “There are several sets of mutually consistent decisions that produce an appreciated outcome for all players. The problem then is for the players—

⁴⁰ Nathan C. Bakkum, “A Concentric Model for Jazz History,” *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 5, no. 2 (2015), 13.

⁴¹ Ibid.

without communication—to select strategies that all belong to the same set.”⁴² Canonne examines this practice as a social contract among performers, with the human element of decision-making being guided by musical interaction at sub-harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic levels. Despite the emancipated nature of free jazz, there are nonetheless unavoidable consistencies that are innate to musical training. Musicians can instinctively use these trained consistencies to communicate. For example, it would be difficult for a trained musician to ignore an obvious and sudden *fortissimo*. Canonne identifies several more, including “the signification musicians tend to attribute to some gestures (*diminuendo* and *rallentando* seen as a cadential gesture).”⁴³ Canonne conducted research at the Norwegian Academy of Music that tasked musicians with improvising along with a pre-recorded tape. Players had no prior knowledge of the music on the tape, and thus were forced to negotiate an unfamiliar musical context in real time.

In that tape (of rather short duration, around ninety seconds), there was an *accident* [sic] (the occurrence of some clear pitches in an otherwise noisy environment) popping out after sixty seconds and disappearing just after a few seconds. This accident should have, by its obvious contrasting power, an immediate salience for improvisers. The experiment’s goal was to determine if improvisers have a tendency to draw formal implications from this salient event.⁴⁴

Canonne’s experiment revealed that most musicians responded to what he termed the “salient event”⁴⁵ in an obvious way. Some musicians used it as a signal to begin a new musical idea; others focused more intensely on the musical idea they were exploring at the time of the event; and still others attempted to imitate the event before interpolating

⁴² Clement Canonne, “Focal Points in Collective Free Improvisation,” *Perspectives of New Music* 51 (2013), 41.

⁴³ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁵ Canonne uses the term “accident,” but argues that the precipitating event “can be any event with enough contrasting power within a given acoustical and musical context.” Ibid., 45.

earlier musical statements. The vast majority of Canonne's subjects interpreted the event as a clear formal marker, as a cue that prompted some type of response. This is simply one strategy for the coordination necessary when traditional formal boundaries have been eliminated. This experiment has implications for considering Norwegian free jazz practices, as will be demonstrated in the forthcoming pages.

When traditional elements, such as a concrete harmonic foundation, are stripped away, tonal principles of tension and release are disrupted, and the potential exists for a sculptural approach to rhythm and melody. Responses to musical events leading to change, and aspects of timbre and tone, are vitally important in the coordination of Norwegian free jazz performances and indeed provide a foundation from which to consider broader jazz practices in Scandinavian countries. An example is the 1970 recording of "Afric Pepperbird" by the Jan Garbarek Quartet, where the musicians cue off of one another and respond in real time to musical happenings like repeated motives, rhythmic figures, and particularly the vocal-like sounds and timbres produced by the members of the ensemble.

In this environment, musical coordination is happening on such minute levels that "it is extremely important for improvisers to be able to create (or to discover) points of convergent expectations (focal points) in order to create some stability in the flux of musical events."⁴⁶ Examples of such focal points are found in the work of Norwegian improvisers throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In the United States, free jazz was often alienating and puzzling to listeners and critics. However, in Norway, an entire generation of young musicians embraced and adopted the "new thing" as a facet of their national

⁴⁶ Ibid., 49-50.

identity. The concept of a focal point for ensemble coordination is centered on various priorities that are identified as distinctively Norwegian. Deploying Canonne's concept of musical "events" or happenings as triggers for responses in free jazz, along with notions of motivic consistency and timbral function, we can examine the internal musical logic of Norwegian improvisers as they structure and restructure musical ideas in real time.

Ornette Coleman and his contemporaries began working with free jazz in part to reclaim the legacy of jazz improvisation from, in their view, the cultural appropriation of the art form by mainstream music industry forces. Throughout the 1960s, social movements galvanizing workers and students were common in Norway. A progressive attitude suffused the nation, driven in part by the global climate of uprising and agitation towards civil rights and equality that marked the turbulent 1960s, and Norwegians immediately embraced free jazz as an expression of these sentiments. For Norwegian musicians, jazz had always represented freedom and the opportunity to take ownership of a specific Norwegian identity. This attitude was undoubtedly forged in the political climate of World War II, and free jazz has played a significant role in the construction of a Norwegian musical identity. The social and political contexts for jazz's emergence in that nation rendered it a powerful form of expression that citizens of the relatively young nation could adopt and rework into their own, distinctly Scandinavian manifestation of an African American art form.

After Coleman and Russell's influence began to take root, free jazz spread quickly throughout parts of Europe. Mike Heffley identifies the era when this creative explosion began, noting, "the music under the 'free-jazz' rubric...ignited the jazz scenes

there [Europe] in the mid-to-late 1960s.”⁴⁷ The movement took on powerful artistic cachet in Norway; jazz had always been synonymous with “cool” in the country, and here was the hippest new version of the influential American import. Moreover, free jazz arrived at the perfect time to capitalize on growing student protest actions throughout the country, which culminated in 1968 with a massive student movement rippling throughout Europe, marked by riots and unrest in Paris and Berlin.

“The sixties radicalization was a transnational wave...its Scandinavian incarnation was peaceful, perhaps especially in Norway where, overwhelmingly, non-violent protests met with a conciliatory, co-optive attitude by authorities.”⁴⁸ Though Norway managed to avoid violence in the process of upheaval, protests were common throughout the latter half of the 1960s. Norwegian academics and intellectuals were the leaders of the movement, owing to “the strong position of Marxism-Leninism and, at the universities, the strength of the so-called critique of positivism.”⁴⁹ Some of the young students at these institutions were jazz musicians who began exploring and experimenting with the avant-garde in this climate of change. Nurturing these explorations was the Norwegian ethic of socialism, so prominent in academia and the foundation of Norwegian society. To this day, Norwegians operate a socialist democracy, where citizens pay high taxes but enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. Collectivity and collaboration are hallmarks of the Norwegian approach to musical experimentation. Yet, each individual is vitally important to the collective, and individual

⁴⁷ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 3.

⁴⁸ Tor Egil Førland, Trine Rogg Korsvik and Knut-Andreas Christophersen, “Protest and Parents: A Retrospective Survey of Sixties Student Radicals in Norway,” *Acta Sociologica* 53, no. 3 (2010), 230.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

identities emerge because of the group. The idea is not to center oneself, but to speak up as one voice supported by many others.

“The first power-of assertions of free jazz in Europe included the phrase ‘kill the fathers’ – from psychology, the image the Oedipus story gave Sigmund Freud, of (among other things), people maturing by taking responsibility for themselves from their overlords.”⁵⁰ Coming on the heels of World War II and in the wake of agitation for civil, worker, and student rights throughout the world, this was a popular sentiment among avant-garde musicians looking to shed the influence of dominant Western musical thought, “burning through and up systems that were millennia in the making, systems musical (diatonic, modal, metric/tonal hierarchies of pitch, rhythmic hierarchies of meter), social (classist, high art above low entertainment, hierarchies of bodies and instruments established by their performance roles), and mythological.”⁵¹ The generation of Norwegian musicians that innovated a new model of jazz were grounded in the spirit of anti-authoritarianism that characterized the 1960s.

Ornette Coleman’s landmark 1959 record *The Shape of Jazz to Come* anticipated a musical movement that would gain more prestige during the fight for civil rights. Early free jazz practitioners in the United States were attempting to return the music to its roots and access pure states of emotion. Elements of transcendent spirituality were invoked in jazz improvisation long before the golden age of black nationalism in the 1970s; one need look no further than John Coltrane’s “Acknowledgement.” Coleman, and other free practitioners in both the United States and abroad, took cues from this religiosity. “The most turbulent of saxophonist Albert Ayler’s free jazz was inspired by the sounds of

⁵⁰ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 12.

⁵¹ Ibid.

ecstatic charismatic Christian church worshippers who were speaking in tongues.”⁵² This invocation of spirituality has been observed in the music of Norwegian musicians, and in the genre of “religious jazz,” described by Fabian Holt as “particularly strong in Norway.”⁵³ Holt’s overall assessment of the Norwegian scene paints a picture of plurality: “The cultural and aesthetic diversity has been greater in Norway, with a wider range of specialized record labels and a vibrant folk-music tradition.”⁵⁴

The association of free jazz with radical progressive politics, however, took hold just as the subgenre was gaining in prestige throughout Europe. Mike Heffley contends that

The social context...included a reaction by musicians against a mainstream jazz culture they felt to be colluding with an oppressive Western hegemony that was intrinsically racist, historically imperialistic and exploitive, venally decadent and vicious as its power was challenged.⁵⁵

This socio-political context is an important contributor to the Norwegian socio-musical identity and shows Norwegian responsiveness to the challenges posed by free jazz to the dominant order. Norwegian jazz is centered on individual voices within a collective, and recovering the voices of those who were disempowered by the class structures of Western Europe. In particular, the association of Norwegian jazz experiments with Norwegian folklore, ethnicity, and images of place have shaped the musical output of an entire generation of Norwegian improvisers. The African American avant-garde jazz musicians who lived and worked in Scandinavia had a lasting impact on

⁵² Mark Gridley, “Misconceptions in Linking Free Jazz with the Civil Rights Movement,” *College Music Symposium* 47 (2007), 141.

⁵³ Fabian Holt, “Jazz and the Politics of Home in Scandinavia,” in *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*, 71.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁵⁵ Heffley, “Free Jazz: Left by American Parents,” *Ibid.*

the young Norwegians they mentored. This influence can be shown in the early creativity of Norwegian musicians like Jan Garbarek and Terje Rypdal, who then liberated a Norwegian sensibility from the model passed down by American avant-garde practitioners. “Some European musicians grasped the spirit of that parentage fully enough to free themselves from the role of slavish imitators, to initiate new approaches and sounds appropriate to their own personal and collective lives.”⁵⁶ To accomplish this, Heffley continues, “They did so through a spontaneous improvisation theoretically free of the diatonic/chromatic and metric systems governing harmony, melody, and rhythm of both pre-free jazz and other Western music, both “high” (art) and “low” (popular entertainment).”⁵⁷

It should also be mentioned that although European jazz musicians approach the music without the burden of the slavery and racism that has long marginalized their American colleagues, jazz still holds special emotional resonance. European jazz musicians come from nations that confronted enemy occupation, genocide, dictatorships, and ethnic tensions throughout the twentieth century. The music’s origins in slavery and racial segregation are part of what render it such powerful and adaptable expression of emotion. This history has been transferred to resonate with the suffering of Europeans. Norway is a young nation with a long history of rule by other factions, as well as a violent Nazi occupation. The musical identity of this nation has become rooted in jazz because the genre allows for invocation of not only the voices of the folk, but the voices of the oppressed and suffering. Norwegians have carefully shaped jazz so that it embodies the spirit of their culture; they picked it up from its American forebearers and,

⁵⁶ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

instead of hewing to the tradition, forged a national identity through their innovations. The appeal of jazz is rooted, in part, in its ability to take on deep meaning and signification to its practitioners. It is so adept at doing so that it has been able to transcend physical and political boundaries to reshape itself in new places. “Free jazz’s deconstructive and reconstructive strategies,” notes Heffley, “were grounded in clear understanding of the Western musical paradigm as a homological reflection of Western history and social order, and they featured evocations of the personal, the primal, the archaic, of prehistorical and ahistorical.”⁵⁸ Free jazz is perhaps the musical genre best equipped to transcend boundaries while absorbing new influences, to be constantly reshaped and recalibrated to best serve the expressive needs of the musicians who create it. To do this, musicians often discard the present and the “establishment” methods and look backwards in time for new ideas and methods.

With the spread of free jazz and avant-garde sounds throughout Europe, a young generation of musicians in countries like Norway seized the opportunity to break fully from American conventions and forge their own path. The emancipation of free jazz provided a new tradition on which Norwegian musicians could build their own model for jazz improvisation. As Mike Heffley points out, “Europe’s move away from imitation of American jazz and into its own originality was, like its African-American model, effected [*sic*] by a coup of improvisation over composition.”⁵⁹ Europeans, especially in Norway, were keen to jump on this new trend and refashioned it to represent a part of their national culture. “This coup,” continues Heffley, “had been preparing and positioning itself in America’s music throughout the twentieth century, and it made its decisive

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

moves in the free-jazz movement of the 1960s – a liberation *of* as much as *from*, especially in its European versions, Western music history and principles.”⁶⁰ For Norwegians, this new originality would come in explorations of musical sound and timbre.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 2.

Chapter Six: Timbre

Timbre is a vital musical element of the fully realized Nordic jazz aesthetic. The country's most famous jazz export is Jan Garbarek, whose keening, spacious tone is fundamental to the Nordic sound and a hallmark of the many recordings released on the ECM label in the 1970s. George Russell, Albert Ayler, John Coltrane, and Don Cherry shaped the musical output and career of saxophonist Garbarek, considered the most formidable of all Norwegian jazz improvisers and one of the original sources of the Nordic sound. Garbarek's early quartet released several albums that reshape the music in a distinctly Norwegian way.

Born in Mysen, Norway in 1947, Garbarek's fortunes were shaped when the family moved to Oslo several years later and the fourteen-year-old was able to hear, for the first time, radio broadcasts of John Coltrane, and later, Dexter Gordon. Garbarek even managed to hear Gordon in person on one of the tenor player's many Norwegian tours. A local competition for young jazz artists secured Garbarek steady work beginning in 1962, and for the remainder of the decade he worked in Norway with Norwegian musicians. Later, Garbarek spent four years under the tutelage of George Russell, who had famously hired the eighteen-year-old Garbarek for his Scandinavian tours and once compared Garbarek's prowess and inventiveness to that of Django Reinhardt, calling him "the most original voice in European jazz" since Reinhardt's heyday.¹ By 1969, Garbarek had gained the attention of ECM founder Manfred Eicher; the first recording he made for the young label was *Afric Pepperbird*.

¹ "Home – Artists – Jan Garbarek," *ECM Records*, <https://www.ecmrecords.com/artists/1435045732/jan-garbarek> (accessed January 12, 2018).

Garbarek “had grown up listening avidly to Coltrane, which led him to the three Coltrane torchbearers [Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp, and Pharaoh Sanders] most noted for their combination of folkish melodicism and phrasing and rich, expressive timbral palette.”² Garbarek’s focus became his distinctive timbre, which continues to resonate with listeners as a sparkling musical representation of the mountainous landscapes of Norway. His official ECM artist biography emphasizes this point: “the intensely focused sounds of his tenor and soprano saxophones have become among the most instantly recognizable and haunting in contemporary music.”³ Though a cosmopolitan, socially progressive country, Norway maintains a rural character and has long been considered an outdoor paradise, with mountains, fjords and lakes all backlit by the aurora borealis. It has a deep, meaningful history of Viking sagas and poetic tales of these rural landscapes that suffuse the present-day culture. Certain ethnic Norwegian instruments, like the reed flute and Hardanger fiddle, contribute to this dominant musical image of a vast, spacious territory where sound travels slowly and glaciers inch along the coastline under the gaze of mountain peaks. Garbarek’s distinctive tone reinforces all of these majestic images, and these have been disseminated with help from ECM.

Fabian Holt argues that, for Norwegians, “Garbarek’s saxophone appeals to narratives of spiritual self-realization and rooted globalism, with jazz as the primary musical platform.”⁴ His tone is intimately tied to a place and remains a touchstone for those living there. Holt contends that jazz in Norway, and Garbarek’s distinct tone in particular, represents “a motion towards spiritual transcendence and reinvigoration of

² Ibid.

³ “Artists – Jan Garbarek,” *ECM Records*.

⁴ Holt, “Jazz and the Politics of Home in Scandinavia,” 51.

Scandinavian emotional culture through African American models of improvisation.”⁵

Garbarek is the most important representative of this transformation and perhaps the most recognizable Norwegian musician, second only to Romantic composer Edvard Grieg. Garbarek used his training and instincts to craft a sound concept that has powerful representations and images of place, but also reflects the new theoretical conceptions advanced by the American avant-garde school.

In the typical Norwegian approach as embodied by Garbarek and his direct contemporaries, “timbre (attack, decay, overtone structure) provides the source material for orchestration, harmony, duration and musical form.”⁶ Timbral variations and manipulations can paint a sonic picture and function as a focal point for a group of improvisers. Among jazz musicians, timbre is often highly idiosyncratic and personal; however, timbre takes on special meaning to Norwegians, whose articulations and utterances reflect musical and extra-musical elements of their national culture. Jan Garbarek’s sound has been described as “clear and majestic, with the long, wide reverb effect of a mountain valley.”⁷ This poetic image is one of dozens in a similar vein attributed to Garbarek and Norwegian jazz more generally. We can examine Garbarek’s early works with his quartet as a case study of the Nordic concept of timbre. Many discussions of this element draw parallels to the geography of Scandinavian countries; the mountainous, frigid landscapes of Norway and Sweden, for example, and the cultivation of specific timbres that bring to mind indigenous melodies echoing across towering fjords. There is more than just tone color in play; attacks, decays, the use of multi-

⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁶ Stephen H. Lehman, “Liminality as a Framework for Composition: Rhythmic Thresholds, Spectral Harmonies and Afrological Improvisation,” (DMA diss., Columbia University, 2012), 1.

⁷ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 74.

phonics and extended techniques, and manipulation of the harmonic series all factor into this broad focus on timbral concerns.

Timbre can additionally be classified based on several subjective terms for the listening experience; descriptors like “spacious,” “lyrical,” “clear,” “longing,” and “vast” are frequently invoked. Aspects like articulation and phrasing must also be considered in examining these timbral tendencies. Individuality in each of these areas is a hallmark of the style. J. Bradford Robinson’s definition of free jazz highlights the use of “a very wide range of highly personal, individual styles. It [free jazz] is probably best defined by its negative characteristics: the absence of tonality and predetermined chord sequences; the abandonment of the jazz chorus structure for loose designs with predefined clues and signposts; an avoidance of ‘cool’ instrumental timbres in favor of more voice-like sounds; and often the suspension of jazz pulse for a free rubato.”⁸ These elements are part and parcel of the Nordic sound, so fundamental to its early construction that we can examine each of them in depth on multiple early recordings. In particular, “voice-like sounds” make up the core of the Nordic timbre, and the masters of the Nordic style can freely express a wide range of vocalizations on their instruments. Free treatment of rhythm, particularly on notated melodies, is commonplace, and the phrasing of many Norwegian improvisers reflects this priority. Micro-inflections—subtle fluctuations of pitch or articulation—on certain rhythms are also commonplace and make up a fusion of timbral force and motivic sensitivity. Garbarek himself has described his method in an article he authored for *The Telegraph* in 2014: “I’m an improvising musician, always

⁸ J. Bradford Robinson, “Free jazz.” *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/10185> (accessed May 21, 2016).

trying to make my playing fit the tone, texture and temperature of the music.”⁹ His mention of temperature is suggestive of some of the Nordic imagery packaged with his sound, but his emphasis of tone is especially pertinent to a consideration of timbral elements in Norwegian improvisation. Garbarek himself concedes, “Whether I like it or not, I am locked into a certain vocabulary or phraseology which is linked to Norwegian folk music.”¹⁰

Garbarek’s second album, *Afric Pepperbird*, recorded in 1970, displays him at his creative peak, with a masterful command of his idiosyncratic tone. Accompanying Garbarek on the record are three fellow Norwegians: guitarist Terje Rypdal, drummer Jon Christensen, and bassist Arild Andersen. Garbarek is at the height of his searching powers, with a blistering tone that cuts through the guitar-driven groove of the ensemble. The title features Garbarek on both tenor and bass saxophones. He covers more reed territory on the rest of the album, with solos on both flute and clarinet. This album was described by one critic as “far out,” calling attention to the free spirit of the musicians: “The whole thing is completely improvised yet utterly compelling, never falling into the trap of total freak out, and never really sounding like jazz as much as deranged world music.”¹¹

“Afric Pepperbird” contains two main sections. The first features a chaotic rising series of pitches performed in unison, Garbarek showcasing a coarse and strident timbre, with ride cymbal hits for punctuation. The second section focuses on the meandering

⁹ Jan Garbarek, “Improvising is about finding a common language,” *The Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/11210971/Jan-Garbarek-Improvising-is-about-finding-a-common-language.html> (accessed March 12, 2017).

¹⁰ “Artists – Jan Garbarek,” *ECM Records*.

¹¹ Fitter Stoke, “Jan Garbarek Quartet: Afric Pepperbird,” *Julian Cope Presents Head Heritage*, <https://www.headheritage.co.uk/unsung/review/595/> (accessed April 24, 2017).

rhythmic explorations of bassist Arild Andersen, who begins developing small rhythmic motives into a metrically uneven but consistent ostinato. Garbarek sneaks into the texture and begins constructing a solo that recalls the wailing of Albert Ayler or Ornette Coleman, building from a state of mumbling shyness to primal screams over the course of roughly three and a half minutes. Garbarek's solo is at times aggressive and speech-like, masterfully building tension and using timbral elements to coordinate the rest of the ensemble. Guitarist Rypdal imitates and distorts Garbarek's moans and growls, using them as springboards, and embellishes the other rhythm section players. The piece's introduction features an obstinate saxophone melody underscored by jarring cymbal splashes. The musicians then enter into a freely developed ostinato established by bassist Andersen, with interjections from guitarist Rypdal. This is the backdrop for Garbarek's fiery solo, which is most notable for the vocal-like timbre, phrasing, and musical syntax he employs throughout.

“Afric Pepperbird” Timbral Outline

0:00	Brusque saxophone melody; cymbals and bass keeping time
0:34	Three seconds of silence
0:37	Bass establishes brief rhythmic motives; drums keep time
0:46	Guitar interjections around bass
1:00	Bass motives begin to coalesce into an ostinato
2:00	Garbarek's tenor saxophone whispers into the texture
2:11	Garbarek plays a rising “moan” figure
2:20	Garbarek plays a brief sequenced riff
2:30	Another series of “moaning” sounds from the saxophone
2:41	Guitar imitates Garbarek's keening sound
2:44	Garbarek “screeches”
2:56	Guitar again imitates Garbarek's timbre and pitch bends
3:01	Garbarek's most coherent idea yet, a disjunct sequenced melody
3:14	Garbarek drops his volume to a whisper, almost muttering
3:25	Garbarek begins another set of “moaning” figures
3:50	Garbarek's tone is squalling and strident; a climax point
4:00	Screaming saxophone
4:31	Garbarek plays more “mumbling” or “ranting” figures

4:38	Return of the “moaning” idea
4:54	Garbarek disappears from the texture momentarily
4:55	Guitar and bass explore a few compact musical ideas
5:34	Garbarek whispers back in on the bass saxophone
5:50	Extended interaction between bass sax and guitar
6:49	Garbarek plays a quasi-cadential riff and lowers his volume
7:06	Bass resumes ostinato from beginning, but altered
7:12	Garbarek plays a repeated riff and bass further alters ostinato
7:44	Cymbal accents, gradual slowing, and sparse drum hits
7:56	End of piece

Garbarek’s playing on this particular track is notable for how closely it resembles the feverish speech of an agitated person, much like Ayler’s attempts to channel religious ecstasy through his saxophone, or Coleman’s musical representation of the cry of a lonely woman. Garbarek squeals, mumbles, stutters, squawks, and moans his way through an extended improvisation. He whispers and mutters under his breath while guitarist Rypdal prods and cajoles him into wailing, tumbling statements. This takes place over an insistent but ambiguous ostinato established by bassist Andersen. The overall effect is of a verbal altercation between the two melody instruments; sometimes Rypdal “talks over” Garbarek, leading to some of the saxophonist’s more elaborate exhortations. There is also a distinctive austerity to the piece; the timbres in use are cool and flinty and fit nicely into the burgeoning ECM aesthetic of the early 1970s. The thin, high-pitched splash and crash cymbal hits from Christensen underscore this icy sentiment. The overall brusque tone of this particular track is characteristic of Garbarek’s early free work, and Rypdal, Andersen, and Christensen were his preferred sidemen during this period. The group’s well-honed communication is evident in how they poke and prod one another into deeper layers of conversation, working from small sets of pitches and rhythmic cells and guided

by Garbarek's distinctive vocalizations. Critics have frequently recognized the quartet that recorded *Afric Pepperbird* as Norway's finest group of the early '70s.

Garbarek's early recordings were influenced by the work of George Russell, famous for his Lydian Chromatic Concept.¹² Garbarek was also deeply affected by the musical curiosity of trumpeter Don Cherry, who pushed Garbarek to explore the folk music of Norway as a tool for his free improvisations during their late 1960s collaborations in Russell's band. This contact with these American musicians set Norwegians on a different jazz trajectory than their Swedish or Danish counterparts. "The first recordings of these Norwegians," notes Fabian Holt, "were characterized by a youthful, existentialist search for musical challenges. There are long solos, sophisticated collective improvisation, and a certain artistic and emotional seriousness."¹³ Norway's strong culture of folk music would only later work its way into the music of Garbarek and other Norwegian musicians. There is precedent for the timbral explorations exhibited by Garbarek and his sidemen, and Russell is one of the common threads.

Russell conceived his Lydian Chromatic Concept in part to shake off the strictures of the dominant-tonic relationship. His examination of a mode as a theoretical explanation for harmonic motion is representative of a broad trend among black intellectuals questioning the accepted wisdom of music theorists. The chordal structure of many jazz standards represented to Russell a sort of tyranny. Susan McClary writes that Russell's notions "inspired a generation of bebop musicians to improvise modal

¹² The Lydian Chromatic Concept uses the practice of jazz theory—with the Lydian mode as linchpin—as the basis for harmony, instead of Western European functional tonality. Specifically, Russell contends that the Lydian mode represents an inescapable form of tonal gravity because it can be constructed from intervals of a fifth. This dominant interval has the strongest pull to a tonal center. In addition, the notes of the Lydian scale can be arranged in thirds to produce a 13th chord (such as a C Major 13 #11), a stereotypical extended jazz harmony.

¹³ Holt, "Jazz and the Politics of Home in Scandinavia," 68.

fragments over implicit pedals instead of maintaining the jazz standards that perpetuated what he regarded as the ideologically oppressive temporality of European culture.”¹⁴

Russell’s work had a powerful influence on this young generation of modal jazz musicians as well, who began to diverge from tonal conceptions of jazz as influenced by the Great American Songbook. “Instead of functional harmony, some modal jazz musicians made use of what George Russell termed ‘chordmodes’ as a framework.”¹⁵

Russell’s system opened new avenues of expression for improvisers and represented a shift away from jazz’s European formal and tonal influences and towards something else. Garbarek was among the European musicians who soaked up Russell’s theoretical work. “Garbarek read, and admits being greatly influenced by Russell’s treatise *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organisation and Improvisation* from 1953,” writes James Dickenson.¹⁶ Garbarek was not the only European musician to grasp Russell’s ideas. Mike Heffley, who has extensively studied the avant-garde scene in Germany, tells us that “George Russell’s and Miles Davis’s turn to Greek modes sent former West German trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff and others in Europe to the early Western music that preceded and gave rise in the West to equal-tempered diatonicism, a deconstructive step back in time.”¹⁷ Russell’s ideas, as well as those of Ornette Coleman, were firmly in place in Europe by 1970 and both had had time to simmer in the post-war European context. Musicians seeking emancipation from the traditional American model found their liberators in American musicians whose thinking was too innovative to be

¹⁴ Susan McClary, “Playing the Identity Card: Of Grieg, Indians, and Women,” *19th-Century Music* 31, no. 3 (2008), 224-225.

¹⁵ Yuri Broze and Daniel Shanahan, “Diachronic Changes in Jazz Harmony: A Cognitive Perspective,” *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 31, no. 1 (2013), 33.

¹⁶ Dickenson, “The Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz,” 82.

¹⁷ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 12.

constrained by borders or thwarted by racism. The Norwegians were influenced not only by Russell's new conception of jazz theory, but by the timbral explorations and sense of stasis associated with modal and cool jazz. Contemporary Norwegian groups like Supersilent and Jaga Jazzist, discussed in Chapter Twelve, employ elements of multiple jazz genres, as well as American styles like minimalism, in creating a wholly new musical expression.

Modal jazz derives its distinctive sound from the use of specific modes dating to ancient Greece. During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church adopted the names of these modes (though the scales themselves were different) that offered several different moods for liturgical plainchant. Due to their intervallic construction and lack of harmonic implications, modes can express greater ambiguity than a major, minor, or even blues scale; jazz improvisers began to favor modes because they allowed for a more linear approach to improvisation, a horizontal orientation as opposed to a vertical one. This style "emphasized the melodic aspects of improvisation over the tonal harmonic progressions characteristic of bebop."¹⁸ Instead of ripping through sequences of extended harmonies at a blistering pace, modes offered a focal point around which improvised melodies could drift more slowly. Improvisers took advantage of modal jazz's sense of stasis to focus on aspects of timbre, attack, decay, and shape, and their interactions with other musicians took on a different dimension. Keith Waters examines this phenomenon in detail in his book on the recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet, where he discusses the interaction amongst Davis, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams in their work in the cool and modal realms. Motivic conversation, microrhythm,

¹⁸ Ibid.

collective improvisation, and timbral shaping figure prominently in the work of this group.¹⁹

A key caveat regarding modal jazz: like many styles of jazz, components of melodic or harmonic invention may not be well represented by notation. In the music of the bebop and post-bop eras, “jazz harmony tends to make extensive use of applied dominants and often features fluctuating tonal centers.”²⁰ This is evident even in modal jazz that deliberately breaks with tonal harmonic practice, where the conventions for writing out the music are not sufficient to fully capture it. This is a common problem in jazz, which has tended generally to defy Western notational strictures from the beginning, but “this issue is present in modal compositions as well: Miles Davis’s ‘So What,’ for instance, is commonly described as being in D-Dorian, a subtle distinction not captured by key signature alone.”²¹ For this style of jazz, a recording might lend far more insight into a performer’s aesthetic than a transcription would. These innovations present new problems in the representation of new ideas for which conventional European theory has no easy answer. The improvisations of Jan Garbarek and his most famous sidemen, discussed below, can mystify attempts at transcription and Garbarek’s work is best understood as a holistic musical process where he transforms pitch and rhythmic material through extended vocalizations. In the process of shaping this sound, Norwegian musicians also acknowledge debts to jazz pioneer Miles Davis. *Kind of Blue*, the 1959 watershed recording created with Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, and an all-star rhythm section, established Davis as a torrential force on the frontier of jazz.

¹⁹ Microrhythm is described by Fernando Benadon as the subtle manipulation of the swing feel, with some musicians varying the spacing and beat placement of eighth notes within a triplet-based swing framework.

²⁰ Ibid., 38.

²¹ Ibid.

Davis's legacy is multi-faceted, but he is given credit for one particular aesthetic: the cool. More than just the eponymous album *Birth of the Cool*, Davis's brand of coolness was a sound and an image. Musically, cool jazz was a counter-reaction to the fireworks of the bebop era. While it is a common misconception that all cool and modal jazz was more deliberate and static, with slow harmonic rhythms, this was not always the case; although the most recognizable examples of both genres tend to avoid rapid tempos and frequent harmonic changes. Bebop played a role in the development of the cool style, but the musicians who embraced the new cool were "advocating a moderation of those musical, emotional or ritualistic qualities associated with the parent style. Most of its musicians pursued a soft level of dynamics...and many avoided a pronounced use of vibrato. Beyond this the pursuit of moderation was diverse and inconsistent."²² Modal jazz shares many affinities with the cool aesthetic, including a sense of temperance, and "because it is free of frequent harmonic interruption it can more easily create an unhurried and meditative feeling. Many performances are based on a two-chord sequence or a drone."²³ Davis helped to shape these new genres by creating a sound on his instrument that was itself an expression, where every note was polished with character and the virtuosity was not in a flurry of notes but in a complete control of melody and mood.

"Timbral control and nuance were key features of Davis's sound," writes Keith Waters, noting that Davis was working from a long tradition of distinctive tone colors

²² Barry Kernfeld, "Cool jazz," *Oxford Music Online. Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.ewu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/06405> (accessed April 25, 2016).

²³ Barry Kernfeld, "Modal jazz." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.ewu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/18827> (accessed September 8, 2016).

inaugurated by Louis Armstrong.²⁴ Davis is an important case study for timbre as expression, though some critics have pointed to his idiosyncrasies more as flaws in his technique than as intentional timbral statements. Nonetheless, new strategies were devised to transcribe and notate Davis's playing style. Robert Walser used terms like "splatter, squeeze, bend, waver, and slide" in his transcription of "My Funny Valentine" as recorded in 1964.²⁵ In order to represent many of these pitch and color variations, scholars have devised new notational symbols that can indicate a variety of ideas. Paul Berliner, in his landmark work *Thinking in Jazz*, provides a glossary of notational symbols that best represent timbral variations. These variations include "pitch with half-closed sound (partially muted, slightly compressed quality)...split attack (extraneous pitch or unpitched sound), pitch with raspy or buzzy sound, and ghosted pitch," as well as "shake, bend, pitch inflections (approximately quarter tone), rip, scoop, slide, bend, and fall-off."²⁶ These notational devices can be used to represent many of the timbral manipulations discussed earlier, though in the case of Jan Garbarek's unique style, notation fails to adequately capture the essence of his vocalizations.

The precedent for timbral construction set by Davis and his colleagues provides a foil for exploring how free improvisers like Garbarek and his ECM cohort deploy timbre in their improvisations. In the simultaneity of free improvisation, timbre is a signpost and a means of deeper communication between musicians in the collective. This connection is significant because it reveals certain styles of jazz improvisation as transnational practices that can be both indigenous and nationless. Scandinavian musicians seized upon

²⁴ Waters, *Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet*, 15.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 513.

these new elements of creativity that black American musicians brought with them. Taking Ornette Coleman's work as a starting point, these musicians established a jazz identity for themselves that is strongly identified with a particular geographical place, yet retains bits and pieces of the American influence that suffused the European scene in the 1960s. This experimental approach dominated the early recordings of Jan Garbarek and others, but new priorities began to reveal themselves as the 1970s progressed.

Chapter Seven: ECM and the Sonic Palette

As European musicians tinkered with the American model, they began to cultivate separate strains of improvised music that in many cases resist easy categorization. “The music these Europeans launched,” writes Mike Heffley,

Has moved so far away from its parent idioms...that its initial free-jazz handle has gradually given way to the more wide open, less jazz-specific descriptor ‘new and improvised music’...it has established the gestures of spontaneous improvisation and idiosyncratic composition not as dated, edgy eccentricities, but as musical and cultural gestures resonant with the mainstream of Europe’s one history.¹

This viewpoint is reminiscent of the racial imagination at work in the divergence of African-American and European jazz styles, an attempt to dissociate from the inherent blackness of the word “jazz” to reestablish European hegemony in terms of musical creativity.

For this reason, I feel “free jazz” is an appropriate term to describe the musical practices of European improvising musicians who are a part of its lineage. Indeed, the influence of African American innovators on the young generation of Europeans is a significant component of the identity formation and aesthetic construction Norwegians began to embrace in the 1970s. While jazz in Norway has been impacted by a broad range of social factors, it has also been forcefully shaped by the state of the European recording industry following World War II and the techniques used by Manfred Eicher for his ECM label. ECM played a vital role in raising the international prominence of Garbarek and other Norwegian musicians, and was instrumental in the 1970s Norwegian jazz explosion, “often referred to as ‘the golden age’ of jazz in Norway, as it was the

¹ Heffley, *Northern Sun, Southern Moon*, 12.

decade in which Norwegian jazz began to be developed considerably through young and aspiring jazz musicians who experimented with the fusion of various other genres.”²

ECM disseminated these early experiments to global audiences.

The ECM label, created by German producer Manfred Eicher in Munich in 1969, still enjoys a reputation for the pluralism and the diversity of its offerings. A monumental European label, ECM has sparked careers and disseminated a series of sonic images that are indelibly connected to Europe. Many European jazz labels were founded before World War II, and most of these collapsed during hostilities. After the war was over and Europe had returned to stability, the market was primed for new labels to distribute a burgeoning European flavor of jazz, with a focus on improvised music. ECM rapidly became the premier label for improvising and experimental musicians, owing in part to producer Eicher’s approach. By the mid-1970s, the “ECM sound” codified aspects of both the Nordic timbre and the avant-garde jazz aesthetic. Martin Gladu calls ECM’s aesthetic a “dialectic of sound and image” that is so powerful that “holistic reactions/representations are spontaneously triggered in connoisseurs’ minds.”³ Eicher himself shaped the label’s oeuvre by fastidiously involving himself with every recording, and many artists who worked with him have described him as a genius, pointing out how Eicher’s “enthusiasm, concentration, keen ear, ability to instigate collaborations and insistence on unbarred spontaneity, allowed them to ‘go deeper.’”⁴ However, the musicians who recorded extensively for the label throughout the 1970s are equally as

² Ragnhild Vreim Tveitan, “The Reception of Norwegian-South African musical interactions: a study of selected musical collaborations from the 19th century to the present,” (M.M. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2007), 27.

³ Martin Gladu, “Horizons Touched: The Music Of ECM,” *All About Jazz*, <https://www.allaboutjazz.com/horizons-touched-the-music-of-ecm-by-martin-gladu.php> (accessed September 28, 2016).

⁴ Ibid.

responsible for ECM's aesthetic. Jan Garbarek and Keith Jarrett are perhaps the most notable of these musicians, both of whom spearheaded creative movements with multiple groundbreaking recordings. Many other Norwegian musicians, such as Terje Rypdal and Jon Christensen, were studio stalwarts for many of ECM's 1970s releases. Other significant ECM-associated musicians include Americans Ralph Towner, John Abercrombie, and Jack DeJohnette, all of whom collaborated at one point with Garbarek, Rypdal, or Christensen. Oslo was a favored recording spot for Eicher, and many of the albums he produced feature his preferred Norwegian studio musicians.

Not restricted to jazz, ECM has released a broad range of musical styles, many related to folk music and experimental concert music, and it later became the premier label for the work of Arvo Pärt and other post-Soviet composers from Eastern Europe. "Transcultural exchanges and genre mixing," notes Gladu, "are also not uncommon in Eicher's inner circle."⁵ One of ECM's most distinctive releases is the 1994 recording *Officium*, featuring Garbarek with early vocal music specialists The Hilliard Ensemble, performing a fascinating fusion of Garbarek's searching saxophone improvisations and music by Guillaume Dufay, Pérotin, and Cristóbal de Morales. *Officium* has sold more than 1.5 million copies since its release, making it one of ECM's most successful recordings. The album was recorded in an Austrian monastery, and as the listener might expect, it is a reverb-drenched journey through spaciousness. *Officium* struck many critics as a strange and unnecessary new age potpourri of disparate styles, but its consistent popularity has been a boon to ECM.

⁵ Ibid.

The label's website touts its "more than 1500 albums spanning many idioms. Emphasizing improvisation from the outset, ECM established its reputation with standard-setting recordings by Keith Jarrett, Paul Bley, Jan Garbarek, Chick Corea, Gary Burton, the Art Ensemble of Chicago and many more."⁶ ECM proudly stands behind the powerful images and philosophy of spontaneous creation that is a hallmark of many of its releases. Even the design of the album covers themselves has been cited as a component of the sound/image dialectic. Austere, color-washed representations of landscapes grace the covers of many ECM releases from the 1970s.

Jan Garbarek is featured on the record *Red Lanta*, recorded in Oslo in 1973 by American pianist Art Lande and released on the ECM label the following year.⁷ The album is a collection of duets between Lande and Garbarek as the latter navigates various reed instruments. The various tunes are pinned together by loose, folkish melodies that offer a consistent interpolation between expansive improvisations. There are no drums or bass on the record. The resulting textural spaciousness of *Red Lanta* has been credited with solidifying the Nordic sound, and is likely the first of the label's releases that fully captured its aforementioned "dialectic of sound and image." Garbarek's solos feature long periods of silence, a hallmark of his improvisational style. His tone, particularly on the flute, is often austere and detached, but deeply reverberant. The flute has a particularly strong association with aspects of Norwegian peasant culture, where it has been a traditional instrument for thousands of years.

The track "Awakening/Midweek" from *Red Lanta* is a fine case study of some stereotypically Nordic aspects of jazz performance. The tune begins brightly, with a

⁶ "The Label," *ECM Records: About ECM*, <https://www.ecmrecords.com/story> (accessed September 28, 2016).

⁷ See Appendix 2, Selected Recordings, for more information about this album.

piano vamp by Lande over which Garbarek performs a folk-like flute melody. This opening section contains a clear tonal center and a fairly logical, singable melody. However, after the opening phrases the piece quickly sheds all harmonic logic and devolves into a section of free improvisation. Lande deconstructs the initial theme, chromatically dismantling it as the harmony fragments downwards. Lande then takes an extended solo. This is followed by a repeat of the opening statement, a similar deconstruction, and then another long improvisation by Lande. Throughout, the impression of spaciousness and starkness is inescapable. The timbres of the two musicians drive this impression. The folk-inspired melody of the piece is broken apart by the improvisers and put back together, Garbarek invoking the strong folk culture of his country in an abstraction.

Garbarek's playing on this record, however, is very different from the searing vocalizations he uttered on "Afric Pepperbird." Garbarek has shown a tendency to experiment with different instrumental combinations that can best expose his sculptural improvisations. Garbarek spoke to one early preference for timbral combination in a 2009 interview with *The Norwegian American* blog: "for many years I had a guitar, rather than a piano or a keyboard in my groups, because I find the guitar left more open space for me, for everyone really – and it's a more flexible instrument in the way the sound is made."⁸ Garbarek's career shows a clear trajectory from his more Ayler/Coltrane-influenced work and the later folk-influenced explorations of austere musical space that would make him famous.

⁸ Jan Garbarek, "An Interview with Jan Garbarek," *The Norwegian American*, <https://www.norwegianamerican.com/featured/an-interview-with-jan-garbarek/> (accessed March 12, 2017).

Folk music, in combination with the sonic palette of the ECM label's recordings, produces an image of Norway guided by its improvising musicians. The ECM label attained a reputation for recordings reflective of Garbarek's "Norwegian music" or "mountain jazz," as it became known among musicians. A fine description of the label's aesthetic can be found in Christopher Porter's *Jazz Times* article covering the young Norwegian scene of the early 2000s.

The ECM sound – moody and spacious – fits into the "idea of North" that goes something like this: Norway's stunning landscape, from fjords and mountains to glaciers and streams, must have provided the artistic inspiration for these early ECM musicians, who mixed bebop chops with folk-music hearts, creating melancholic music that reflects the land of the midnight sun. Norway's young musicians have a pet name for that sound: mountain jazz.⁹

Holt has argued that the ECM oeuvre is distinctive for its suggestions of native Norwegianness, of a concept of place identified as home. "The ECM sense of home," Holt writes, "is an imagined space outside the family house in a village or city. It is a space created through mediated sound."¹⁰ References to Norwegian landscapes – and the powerful connection between Norwegian people and their open spaces – abound in the visual imagery of Norwegian jazz. This "mountain jazz" reverberates with deep feelings of connection to the earth and the landscape. Jan Garbarek's album covers "use photos of deserted nature, typically in cold areas without much plant life and have references to Nordic medieval mythology, including sagas and runes."¹¹ Much of the music contained on ECM recordings takes on the instrumentation of a chamber music ensemble and in some cases mimics a chamber music style. This, Holt argues, is an explicit invocation of

⁹ Christopher Porter, "The Sound of Young Norway," *Jazz Times*, <https://jazztimes.com/features/the-sound-of-young-norway/> (accessed September 19, 2016).

¹⁰ Holt, "Jazz and the Politics of Home in Scandinavia," 71.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

the intimacy of musical performance. “The emphasis on the aesthetics of this performance space is a deep identification with European modernity and creates a context for transforming indigenous musics into contemporary folk art from a European perspective.”¹²

The “ECM sound” of the 1970s is quintessentially Norwegian, but the influence of the expatriate American improvisers permeates the music on ECM’s recordings. The liberal use of space and silence in improvisation, one component identified as stereotypically Norwegian, was mentioned by Garbarek in a recollection of his studies with George Russell. Garbarek was taught to work with limited materials in his expressions, saying of Russell,

He gave me two notes, a “c” and a “c-sharp”, I think it was. And he said: “You can only play these two notes for five minutes.” And that was like a liberation, there was nothing more to think about, you just had to deal with that and make as much as possible – make something interesting out of it, you know. It kind of taught me that limitations in any form can trigger creativity, rather than limit them.¹³

Though he participated in the free jazz scene in its European infancy, when priority was placed on truly extemporaneous expression in the modernist tradition, Garbarek came to see certain strictures as necessary for the stimulation of creativity, particularly group interaction. These strictures take on many forms, with emphasized pitches as but one example. There are multiple other means used by Garbarek and his contemporaries to guide their groups through a dialogue. These characteristics have each contributed in some manner to the cultivation of the ECM aesthetic as heard on numerous free jazz recordings from ECM’s golden age of the 1970s.

¹² Ibid., 70.

¹³ Ibid.

Microrhythm, Motive, and Pitch Manipulation

The improvisers discussed so far—Jan Garbarek, Terje Rypdal, and Art Lande—demonstrate a tendency to organize their solos motivically, particularly in their early, more African American-inspired forays into free jazz. However, motive is used as an extension and enhancement of their close imitation of the human voice. Garbarek, for example, tends to sequence his motives played with a wailing timbre, as a person trying to speak a few words through tears might do, warping his motive in real time to reflect the anguish of the tone. Motives are a common improvisational building block in jazz; much of the music of the big band era consisted of repeated block-scored motives, or riffs, stacked and chained together and repeated as the backdrop for improvisation. Many highly lauded jazz musicians from the big band and bebop eras are considered motivic improvisers, including alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, Count Basie, legendary trombone virtuoso J.J. Johnson, and Thelonious Monk. The rise of the avant-garde scene after Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* was released in 1959 precipitated a new emphasis on motive as structural implement. "Motivic improvisation took on greater urgency in the context of modal jazz and avant-garde jazz in the late 1950s and 1960s."¹⁴ This emphasis on motivic coherency represented the shifting priorities. "Since the players no longer negotiated a predetermined harmonic progression," writes Keith Waters, "many relied on principles of motivic organization."¹⁵

Motivic analysis has been applied to the work of free jazz practitioners like Ornette Coleman. Michael Cogswell has examined how Coleman uses melodic motives that are developed logically despite the absence of parameters like meter or functional

¹⁴ Waters, *Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet*, 54.

¹⁵ Ibid.

harmony.¹⁶ Keith Waters describes John Coltrane and Wayne Shorter's use of motives in their improvisations as a "motivic cell" technique where "a soloist states and develops an underlying identifiable short motive...identified through repetition of interval, rhythm, contour, pitch, or some combination of those elements."¹⁷ Specifically, he shows how Coltrane uses the pitches of a bass ostinato as an improvisational resource for his famous solo on the recording of "Acknowledgement" from *A Love Supreme*. The album was released in 1965, two years before Coltrane's death, a deeply spiritual and significant avant-garde masterpiece. Coltrane's famous F–A-flat-F– B-flat motivic cell is chanted like a mantra as Coltrane transposes the motive into all twelve keys. Combined with Coltrane's distinctive tone, the feeling of religious ecstasy is powerful. In free improvisation, ensemble coordination can hinge on a musical element as small as a three or four-note motive. Jazz improvisers frequently use short repeated motives as a conversational device. For Waters, this conversational aspect gives motivic improvisation greater collaborative importance since "it occurs not only within individual improvisations, but also between two solos, as one solo ends and another begins."¹⁸

Garbarek and Rypdal utilize motivic cells in this way on "Afric Pepperbird," trading them liberally. Rypdal frequently imitates Garbarek's vocalizations, mocking "answers" or interruptions. Garbarek utilizes several groups of pitches that he manipulates through timbre and rhythmic distortions. He mimics the bass line constructed by Arild Andersen, parroting the pitches in his own rhythm. Andersen takes the lead on this tune, establishing the pitch and rhythmic material for the other musicians, who then

¹⁶ Michael Cogswell, "Melodic Organization in Two Solos by Ornette Coleman," *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 7 (1994-1995), 101-144.

¹⁷ Waters, *Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet*, 55.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

manipulate and transform these motivic ideas. This practice is used throughout the album and forms a major component of the group interaction and conversation innate to free jazz. There are many occasions where Rypdal in particular asserts himself rather obnoxiously over bassist Andersen, insisting on decorating the bass line with dissonant motives of his own that deliberately avoid Andersen's suggested F minor tonality.

As one trait of jazz is its rhythmic flexibility, certain expressions of improvisers are difficult to capture notationally. Every rhythmic transcription of a soloist is a compromise, fixing symbols to a performance that is more ephemeral than tidy written notes would suggest. Fernando Benadon has written about the idea of microrhythm in jazz: musicians manipulate eighth notes on minute levels, endowing their performances with new levels of expression. He establishes a value to discuss "the temporal proportion between two subsequent eighth notes," what he termed a beat-upbeat ratio, or BUR.¹⁹ In the course of his research, Benadon found that "some of the microrhythmic mechanisms" he observed in timing articulations of soloists "sometimes interacted with melody and phrase structure."²⁰ Benadon's BUR analysis includes what is known as the Inter-Onset Interval, or IOI: the duration of each individual eighth note. "Straight" or even eighth notes, as frequently heard in concert music, are assigned a value of 1.0, or a BUR of 1:1, where "the duration of both eighths in the beat is perceptually equal."²¹ As performers stretch the length of their eighth notes, the BUR rises correspondingly, with a true "swing triplet" feel assigned a BUR of 2.0, or 2:1. A dotted eighth-sixteenth figure would be quantified as 3.0, or 3:1.

¹⁹ Fernando Benadon, "Slicing the Beat: Jazz Eighth Notes as Expressive Microrhythm," *Ethnomusicology* 50, no. 1 (2006), 74.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

Benadon observed great individuality among the soloists he studied, and his findings “support the long held assertion that different performers tend to gravitate towards different microrhythmic feels.”²² Certain musicians interpret the fundamental eighth-note swing feel of jazz differently, with micro-nuances of articulation. Garbarek, for example, shapes his vocalizations using these micro-nuances, where his solo utterance imitates the elocution of spoken words, following the natural contours of rhythm that are implied by his voice-like improvisations; microrhythm proceeds logically from the inflections and rise and fall of speech implied by his performing style.

These microrhythms interact with timbre and patterns of motivic conversation as well. “Motivic repetition involves a restatement not only of pitch and rhythm information, but also of microrhythmic features.”²³ If each performer has an idiosyncratic approach to microrhythm, they have adopted a performance-based dialect that they can then use to communicate with the other musicians in the collective. Some musicians, like Albert Ayler and Jan Garbarek, as well as John Coltrane, frequently speak through their instruments in a manner that defies any conventional method of written preservation, leading to a consideration of microgestures of rhythm and motive as more akin to vocalizations than rhythms. On “Afric Pepperbird,” Garbarek’s subtle manipulations of burbling or fluttering rhythms shapes them into motivic cells that are nonetheless characterized more by the tone and timbre used in uttering them. Indeed, Garbarek’s early aesthetic as an improviser involved speaking through his saxophone, with solos that are constructed as if they are the street corner rantings of a spoken-word artist.

²² Ibid., 74.

²³ Ibid.

Benadon refers to these “essential rhythmic nuances” as difficult to represent in standard musical notation, but maintains “the rhythmic unevenness of the eighth-note is one of the hallmarks of jazz.”²⁴ Under Benadon’s system, Garbarek’s approach to rhythmic nuance wouldn’t necessarily fit into the “swing triplet” feel Benadon uses as a backdrop for his analysis; rather, Garbarek’s utterances stretch and manipulate time in a much freer manner, frequently divorced from solid temporal markers. On “Afric Pepperbird,” Garbarek’s liberal use of ghost notes, scoops, fluttering keys, slides, and ornamentation make it difficult to distinguish precise articulations from the surrounding textural chaos. Benadon admits that his system leaves out these sorts of performances for which there are “imprecise modes of attack.”²⁵ Nonetheless, the notion of microrhythmic manipulation helps to distinguish musicians from one another, as each jazz musician brings their own subtleties of rhythmic inflection to their performance, particularly in the free jazz style.

Benadon’s study found that many musicians tend to increase the BUR value at the ends of phrases, with what he terms a “BUR surge” serving as a kind of cadential gesture to mark a structural shift. This approach is evident with Garbarek’s solo on “Afric Pepperbird,” where his manipulations of eighth notes begin with a BUR somewhere in between 1.0 and 2.0, but conclude with one of these surges as his solo increases in intensity. Benadon maintains that soloists do this “in order to synchronize both downbeats and offbeats with the rhythm section, thereby incorporating a phrase-ending expressive device.”²⁶ Once Garbarek switches to the bass saxophone near the end of the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 80.

recording, his BUR relaxes back into the even eighth note feel, with occasional interjections closer to the 2:1 ratio of the swing triplet. Most of Garbarek's solo hews closely to the even eighth note, particularly at the beginning and the end of the recording. Benadon concludes that much of jazz, even jazz derived from the tradition of hard-driving swing, invokes the even eighth note feel far more often than is assumed. Garbarek's solo on "Afric Pepperbird" supports this assertion; there is very little happening in the surrounding rhythm section to suggest a swung triplet feel, and as Garbarek ramps up his intensity, the need for even eighths becomes more pressing in order to synchronize attacks with the other musicians.

As the free jazz style discards many conventional signposts of jazz performance, analytical techniques often applied to post-tonal concert music can be utilized to determine the strategies and patterns these free musicians use in constructing their group interactions and the sounds that are generated. Specific pitch class sets can be identified as the foundational material for extended improvisations among musicians like Anthony Braxton, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, and Cecil Taylor. Often these are nothing more than repeated gestures that can be mutated and shifted through the process of group interaction. In some cases, musicians explore particular sets and their transformations, but within a free jazz context this exploration is often prompted through group dialogue. This hearkens back to Coleman's idiosyncratic and revolutionary approach to pitch and transposition in his later free jazz experiments, particularly his Harmolodics method, which emphasizes the way pitch can be deployed both idiosyncratically and collaboratively. Additionally, many avant-garde musicians utilize the common tones under transposition and inversion that can be derived from these pitch sets. Intervallic

relationships among specific sets are frequently explored in improvisation, particularly in the ECM work of Jan Garbarek and his preferred sidemen. There is a connection between the use of various sets—particularly smaller fragments of larger sets such as tetrachords and hexachords—and the concept of motivic interaction. Many subsets of larger pitch class sets express the potential for motivic exploration and development within a larger melodic framework.

Steven Block has discussed this principle in the work of John Coltrane with his analysis of the improvisations on the title track from *Ascension*, “demonstrating how Coltrane’s improvised solo can be heard in terms of manipulations and transformations of pitch-class sets...Coltrane generates the first half of [the analyzed solo] by using two similar trichords (3-2 and 3-3), while in the second half he switches to stringing together various transpositions of trichord 3-7.”²⁷ Yet, even Coltrane’s use of these sets was predicated on group interaction, taking cues from the pitch material suggested by pianist McCoy Tyner just prior to his shift in pitch set. Robert Hodson argues that Block ignores “more qualitative musical issues,” including the group dynamic, and notes that the new trichord appears when Tyner “begins repeating the whole-step tone cluster A-flat– B-flat; it is Coltrane’s subsequent emphasis on these same pitches that facilitates the change to trichord 3-7.”²⁸ The mathematical rigor with which many theorists approach issues of set class transformation can occasionally obscure the human factors of communication and interaction that mark a jazz performance; nonetheless, Block points out that “pitch organization in free jazz can be very sophisticated; even ostensibly tonal compositions in this style cannot be adequately understood simply by reference to the harmonic

²⁷ Robert Hodson, *Interaction, Improvisation and Interplay in Jazz* (London: Routledge, 2007), 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

underpinnings of the more tonal sections or to some surface-generative process of motivic invention.”²⁹ Indeed, pitch organization and exploration takes place on an independent level in the free improvisation of both American and European musicians. The exploration of pitch material goes beyond moments of implied tonality, and musicians frequently engage with motives as a group. This process is especially evident on *Afric Pepperbird*.

In Block’s article “Pitch-Class Transformation in Free Jazz,” he discusses the strategies employed by free improvisers in constructing their expressions. He uses the term “working-out,” borrowed from Cecil Taylor, to describe the process of construction: “The working-out of material is an additive or subtractive process in which motives or pitch material are not only reinterpreted and reworked but also altered slightly from phrase to phrase in a chain of progression that may span a long period of time.”³⁰ According to Block, we may observe the use of certain gestures—pitch class sets—within a free jazz framework that are then worked out through reiteration and permutation. These gestures may contain melodic and cadential pitch material and are frequently transformed through inversion. Block’s analysis of Ornette Coleman’s “Lonely Woman” shows how Coleman utilized a specific group of tetrachords to construct his melodic line, and how those tetrachords provide the basis for his motivic utterances as well. “Lonely Woman” makes overtures towards tonality but instead pivots around a number of tetrachords, demonstrating the level of thought and consideration among the musicians in developing the melodic line. The tune contains a head section, where the primary melody is stated, followed by two choruses, the second of which does

²⁹ Steven Block, “Pitch-Class Transformation in Free Jazz,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 12, no. 2 (1990), 181.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

not follow typical phrasing conventions and actually reflects the structure of the head tune. As Block points out, “there is a constant return of the D-minor pedal” throughout the piece, though the bass line ascends chromatically from D through F to mark the first chorus.³¹ Block identifies the sets in the head as “Z15[0,1,4,6] and 4-Z29, 4-4[0,1,2,5] and 4-14[0,2,3,7]” which are all connected through the same operation, “T₃M.”³² “Lonely Woman” also emphasizes the D natural minor scale, and Coleman utilizes pitch sets that sketch out this scale through transformation by the end of the tune. In free jazz, these pitch sets become the basis for the construction of implied harmony, even when an ensemble lacks harmony instruments.

Chord and scale substitutions, altered chords, and various non-diatonic scales, frequent in jazz since the bebop era of the mid-1940s, are themselves forms of transformations of pitch sets, albeit worked out primarily in performance and practice rather than through analysis. Nonetheless, it is possible to examine the work of many free jazz practitioners and discover how certain scale fragments can aggregate into pitch sets that can then be manipulated by the group in a collective process of transformation. Transformation is a powerful metaphor for the state of collective liminal transcendence sought by Civil Rights leaders and free jazz pioneers alike, and we can view the holistic process of pitch transformation throughout a dialogue as part of the assertion of the individual voice of the musician.

We may apply some of these analytical techniques to the recording of “Afric Pepperbird,” starting with its chaotic opening section and the transition to the more structured bass-driven section. The bass line provided by Arild Andersen, starting at 0:37

³¹ Ibid., 194.

³² Ibid., 195.

on the recording, returns repeatedly to the pitch F and frequently outlines a perfect fifth between F and C. The only pitches used by Andersen to establish this initial bass line are F, C, and E-flat. Guitarist Rypdal meanders around Andersen's repeated ostinato, initially favoring Andersen's pitches, and after a few moments he begins to explore the pitches chromatically adjacent to Andersen's repeated Fs. Rypdal frequently plays in the same register as the bassist, freely mingling with Andersen's sound, and continues to embellish a cluster of pitches centered on F when Jan Garbarek enters on the tenor saxophone.

Garbarek holds a barely audible B-flat, moves briefly to C and then back to B-flat completely out of the time firmly established by Christensen, gradually increases his volume, and then begins a series of pitch bends and glissandi that evoke intense vocal-like effects. All sense of tonality or central pitch vanishes at this stage. Garbarek devolves into intense chromaticism and the rhythm section avoids asserting any given set of pitches. Garbarek's entry has the effect of upending the sense of consistency and regularity established by the bass, drums, and guitar, and from his appearance onward the tune devolves into an ever-more-frantic free-for-all. The bass disappears completely while Christensen plays a series of chaotic cymbal splashes and Garbarek wails. Shortly thereafter, Garbarek drops out. Around 5:00, Andersen returns to prominence in the texture, playing a new bass line, one that consists of C, F, and F#. Rypdal and Andersen spar for a moment, and Andersen takes a brief solo of his own. Garbarek returns, this time on the bass saxophone, and he soon begins quoting Andersen's new bass line in the bassist's octave. Around the 7:00 mark, Andersen segues into the bass line he established at the beginning of the second section (0:37), and Garbarek plays a repeated set of pitches using the same two rhythmic motives, a phrase he repeats until the end of the tune: C, F,

and F#, followed by B, E, and F. These are the same pitches used by Andersen in the new bass line he devises at 5:00, but Garbarek distorts the rhythm and sequences Andersen's bass motive downward. Garbarek milks the last note of this sequence of riffs with a lazy trill, and the three rhythm section players conclude the tune.

"Afric Pepperbird" can be analyzed from multiple perspectives, focusing on timbre, pitch, and motive, to demonstrate the intensive level of group interaction that emerges from this primordial texture. The unison opening section, which lasts roughly thirty-four seconds, is notable for its coarse timbre and overall sense of coldness, which is accented by the incessant cymbals. Once the tune proper begins, at 0:37, the motivic material that Andersen presents forms the basis for Rypdal's initial soloing, though he quickly begins to ascend chromatically away from Andersen's repeated F. The sustained pedal Fs in the bass, when combined with occasional leaps to the C and E-flat above, seem to imply a tonality of F minor. However, any sense of key structure rapidly dissolves when Rypdal comes to the foreground over Andersen's ostensibly tonal bass line, as he seems determined to undermine Andersen's insistent plea for tonal order. This is a fascinating example of interaction among the rhythm section, as Christensen responds to the sparring between the bass and guitar by shifting his accents into an arrhythmic pattern to further add to the discomfort. By the time Garbarek enters, the sense of tonality is tenuous at best and experiences a complete breakdown as Garbarek ratchets up his intensity. By the time he changes instruments and begins improvising on the bass saxophone, the order laid down by Andersen has returned, albeit more disorganized than before, and Garbarek immediately goes to work interacting with Andersen over his new bass line.

The timbres displayed on this piece are razor sharp, cold, and airy. Bassist Andersen pounds out a round but dry tone while the drummer Christensen only plays high-pitched, icy splash cymbals to keep time and to accent the other musical happenings. Both Rypdal and Garbarek do more “talking” than playing, as their timbres and styles so strongly resemble vocalizations that transcribing their solos proves quite difficult. This may be one of the more arcane aspects of free jazz. Traditional music notation utterly fails to capture the essence of Garbarek’s performance, rhythmically or melodically. It is akin to transcribing the speech patterns and utterances of a street preacher. These vocalizations are a crucial part of this Norwegian aesthetic, and Garbarek is the most recognized exponent of this performance style and the most vocally oriented in his saxophone playing, but they also have roots in the work of Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman, both of whom “spoke in tongues” through their instruments and channeled music that was beyond simple written notation.

The musicians in Garbarek’s group use motivic elements as a part of their conversation. This is most notable on “Afric Pepperbird” when Andersen establishes a second bass line at approximately 5:00. His pitches, C, F, and F#, are contained in a brief rhythmic motive that Garbarek begins to copy from the bassist. Garbarek alters the rhythm of the motive, leading Andersen to insist on his pitches in his specific rhythm while Garbarek plays the same pitches in his preferred rhythm. Coming at the end of the tune, while Garbarek is playing the bass saxophone, this brief interaction is significant because of Garbarek’s mutation of the rhythmic motive and the two instrument’s similar registers. More than a simple question and answer scenario, the interaction between the two feels much deeper, more like a distorted echo of a thought, a misremembered

conversation, or a gently mocking protest. Underscoring all of this so effectively that even his frosty metallic splashing feels like a seamless part of the texture, Christensen nonetheless effortlessly holds the group together by providing consistent time, which he occasionally disrupts through shifting accents and short jaunts into compound meters.

The pitches emphasized by Andersen at the beginning and end of the second section of “Afric Pepperbird” form two trichords that provide nearly all of Andersen’s pitch material when he is operating in a traditional rhythm section role. The first trichord of C, E-flat, and F is a [0,3,5] trichord with a Forte name of 3-7B, identified by Larry Solomon’s table of pitch class sets as an incomplete dominant seventh chord.³³ All sense of formal structure or pitch consistency evaporates around the 4:00 mark, when Garbarek is at his fever pitch. Whether Andersen’s pitch plan was worked out in advance is unknown, but both Rypdal and Garbarek are exceptionally responsive to the bassist’s lead. Both musicians offer strong opposition to Andersen’s insistence on suggesting a tonal center, and Rypdal is especially contrarian. Garbarek’s utterances begin as a tiny whisper and ultimately roar to a full-throated scream, and Andersen’s plea for tonal order is completely subsumed, only to briefly resurface after Garbarek switches instruments to the bass saxophone. This shift in instrumental range and color, a change from Garbarek’s earlier screeching tenor, seems a deliberate provocation to Andersen as the two musicians swirl around one another in conflict. Andersen’s closing bass line consists of the pitches C, F, and F#, or [0,5,6] (Forte name 3-5B). This trichord perverts the earlier [0,3,5] used by Andersen to establish the tenuous tonality of the piece, and emphasizes the tritone contained within the [0,5,6] trichord. Perhaps this is Andersen’s way of filling in the

³³ Larry Solomon, “Table of Pitch Class Sets,” *SolomonsMusic.net*. Archive version only, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170718150349/http://solomonsmusic.net/pcsets.htm> (accessed July 18, 2018).

missing tritone from his opening evocation of the dominant seventh chord. The particular trichord of [0,3,5] is considered incomplete because its defining tritone is missing.

Andersen sets up the piece by outlining a dominant seventh chord that is missing the interval that provides its quality. After much bickering and squalling amongst the rest of the group, Andersen returns to emphasize the absent tritone in his closing bass line as the group fades to a collective whisper.

The performances on *Afric Pepperbird* represent the vanguard of the Norwegian style, and the musicians performing on the record are considered the finest Norwegian group ever assembled. These musicians convert elements familiar to the jazz tradition and ideas from the free jazz pioneers of the 1960s in a new mélange of styles that displays many markers of Norwegian style. The cool, austere, flinty timbres and the intense, deeply focused group improvisations where anything is possible are most commonly associated with Garbarek and his sidemen. Later in Garbarek's career, he began to explore another component of Norwegianness in his music, one more directly connected to Norwegian heritage than album art or a timbral signature. Norwegian jazz is suffused with an appreciation for the music and culture of the Norwegian folk, the peasants of the rural far north, and local hero Edvard Grieg.

Chapter Eight: Folk Identities

Norwegian jazz is remarkable for its dependence on traditional Norwegian folk songs as a point of departure in improvisation and in its overall aesthetic. While many Norwegian musicians have avoided the standards that are the core repertory of jazz in America, they nonetheless look to a body of songs for melodic material. This is evident throughout the history of Norwegian music, in both the realms of art and popular music. “Norway, unlike some other countries, has never experienced a break in continuity in its folk music tradition. On the contrary, folk music enjoyed a great increase in popularity in the 1970s and was even discovered by jazz and pop musicians, who realized that they could give their own genres local color by borrowing folk elements.”¹ Regarding the use of American standards, Garbarek told an interviewer, “The so-called standards are not *my* standards. I don’t feel a close attachment to that music, music that is made for the Broadway shows. They’re great compositions, but I’ve never had the urge to use that music as the basis for my playing.”² Garbarek stressed that the musicians he respected and enjoyed working with were “doing their own, shall we say, native version. They find their own direction, influenced by their own culture, but still using very strong basic elements of jazz.”³

There are several characteristics of Norwegian folk music that set it apart from the Western concert tradition. Melodies are often syncopated and phrase lengths are unusual and sometimes asymmetrical. Generous portions of grace notes and ornamentation of melodies, along with the dotted rhythms popularly called the “Scotch snap,” are

¹ Jean Christensen, *New Music of the Nordic Countries* (Hillsdale, New York: Pendragon Press, 2002), 426.

² Jan Garbarek, *Down Beat*, (July 1986), 26-27.

³ Ibid.

holdovers from the Hardanger fiddle tradition. However, a dominant feature of Norwegian folk music is its favor for the augmented fourth in a major scale. It would be tempting to simply describe this as use of the Lydian mode, but the alteration of the fourth is an inflection, not a concrete musical interval. Just as blue notes are distinctive inflections that elude easy notation, the Norwegian use of an inflected fourth is a stylistic feature that is not so easily categorized. Hardanger fiddle playing is a core part of Norwegian folk music, and collectors of these songs have noticed the frequent appearance of particular intervals that, for James Dickenson, “sound very Norwegian” when organized into a tone row and deployed in composition.⁴ “The typical Norwegian folk music mood is established” by repetition of these Hardanger intervallic inflections; “the upward-rising opening tone row F—B-flat—D occurs no less than fifteen times in the melodic line” of a traditional wedding march.⁵ In addition to these melodic devices and other characteristics, the Norwegian peasant dance called a *halling* is a favorite point of departure for musicians in Norway’s later free jazz scene.

The musical instruments and tone colors of Norwegian peasant tunes live on in some of the folk-jazz experiments of the 1970s. “The human voice, the fiddle and the *langeleik* [a type of dulcimer] have contributed most to the subsequent colouring of Norwegian jazz,” contends James Dickenson, “since these were the most commonly available performing media. All have their own repertoire varying from elementary melodies to works calling for virtuoso technique.”⁶ Don Cherry, who worked with Coleman, George Russell, and Garbarek (as well as some of his contemporaries),

⁴ Dickenson, “The Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz,” 96.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 46.

encouraged the Norwegians to look to their ethnic sources. “Cherry was credited by Garbarek as being the starting influence for his and other Norwegians’ investigation of their indigenous folk music,” writes Dickenson. Garbarek told an interviewer, “It was Don who first got us interested in our own folk music, who made us realize how much there was to check out in our own back yard. We were to make a radio broadcast once, and Don asked us if we couldn’t perhaps play a Norwegian folk tune. That wasn’t exactly what we young Norwegian Jazzers were into at the time! But we came to change.”⁷ Cherry, Russell, and Quincy Jones all guided this young Norwegian generation through the process of discovering their own folk materials and asserting a distinctive Norwegian voice.

Jones, Russell and Cherry showed the Scandinavians what they could achieve, and all who took part in their jazz ‘mini-universities’ had ample time to find hidden depths in themselves and to acquire confidence and experience before going further in their own countries and abroad to distinguish themselves in improvised music, composition and experimentation.⁸

Taking Cherry’s suggestion to heart, Garbarek “became a jazz ethnomusicologist, learning to sing various folk traditions and infusing his improvisations with them...He refuses to call his distinctive music ‘jazz’...it is simply Norwegian music.”⁹ Garbarek “mined the ethnic music traditions of Norway for a repertory of musical material.” Following his formative interactions with Don Cherry, and aware of the trumpeter’s interest in the ethnic music of Norway, Garbarek’s *Tryptykon*, recorded for ECM in 1972, solidified his reputation as a jazz folklorist. Two particular tracks on the album stand out:

⁷ Ibid., 85.

⁸ Ibid., 87.

⁹ Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux, *Jazz* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 681.

“Surrounded by a framework of free jazz, the album includes two tracks, ‘Selje,’ a willow-flute tune, atmospherically direct from the fjord and ‘Wedding March’ (Bruremarsj), directly based on a fiddle melody of Olav Holø.”¹⁰ The march tune would have been quite familiar to Norwegian folk song enthusiasts, and in his interpretation Garbarek puts a slightly more energetic spin on the traditional, stately melody. Edvard Grieg arranged a version of the *Bruremarsj* for one of his folk song collections. *Tryptykon* is notable simply because it “was the first time Garbarek had used a Norwegian folk melody as the basis for his improvisations.”¹¹ This aspect of Garbarek’s sound has informed his later reputation, and since the 1980s he has been viewed more as a “world musician” than as the searing avant-garde figure of the early 1970s.

In addition to his use of ethnic melodies, Garbarek’s sound and his distinct phrasing bear more than a slight resemblance to the vocalizing of the Sami people of northern Norway. The Sami, traditionally known as Laplanders, are an indigenous group that inhabits the area north of the Arctic Circle. Between 40,000 and 60,000 Sami people reside in Norway. Sami folk songs are known as *joiks* (or yoiks) and have deep spiritual meaning. They are often simple melodies built on pentatonic scales (though some of the scales used are not tempered in the Western sense) and intoned in a spacious, haunting timbre. Many Sami songs originated as functional melodies for summoning herd animals across the vast, frigid spaces above the Arctic Circle. This practice has been preserved, and in the present day many Sami songs are mingled freely with elements of jazz and popular music. Joiks are notable for their “folkish” traits: static drones and bass lines, ample ornamentation of melodies, microtonal inflections, and free rhythm. Composers of

¹⁰ Dickenson, “The Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz,” 89.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

Norwegian classical music have also looked to Sami songs for inspiration; Jean Christensen describes the work of contemporary composers who “became fascinated by the natural surroundings of northern Norway and simultaneously discovered the potential of the Sami *yoik*, a typical Lappish folksong.”¹² These songs were used as the basis for “thematic material in orchestral, chamber and piano works,” with an emphasis on the songs’ “monotonous and ecstatic elements.”¹³

Garbarek, for his part, has utilized these homegrown materials throughout his career, crafting improvisations that reflect his cultural heritage and the sound concept grounded by place. As Garbarek told Gary Bannister, “Norway’s isolation has preserved much of its extremely old melodies and extremely archaic ways of singing. It was very important to me to listen to folk music from all over the world, but especially from Norway. You might say I live in a spiritual neighborhood which is scattered geographically.”¹⁴ Fabian Holt argues that, as Garbarek’s international stature grew, he explored a realm of jazz termed “ethnic jazz,” music that utilized Norwegian folk melodies and other signifiers of Norwegian culture. “He developed a more authoritative voice,” writes Holt, “and found his niche as an ‘ethnic’ performer, in the sense that indigenous traditions and the construction of a new sense of home became central to his music, as well as to its marketing and reception.”¹⁵ Garbarek, however, was not alone in his exploration of folk materials in a jazz context.

Throughout the 1970s, folk jazz was a popular style in Norway and the musicians involved variously interpreted the rich folk song heritage of the country, sometimes in

¹² Christensen, *New Music of the Nordic Countries*, 426.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Jan Garbarek, interview by Gary Bannister, 1994. Quoted in Heffley, *Northern Sun*, 75.

¹⁵ Holt, “Jazz and the Politics of Home in Scandinavia,” 69.

progressive and experimental ways that brokered no small amount of consternation among folk music purists. 1960s forays into folk jazz were met with mixed reactions. The liner notes from a recorded compilation of these experiments recount the controversy surrounding the reaction to a 1964 Stan Getz cover of a traditional Swedish folk song, *Ack Värmland du sköna (Dear Old Stockholm)*. The initial reaction to these experiments, according to the notes, was less than enthusiastic, and critics applied a term—“mountain jazz”—intended as a pejorative that would later be adopted with pride by Norwegian musicians. Lars Finborud claims that initially, “Both Norwegian folk music *and* jazz communities opposed the impurity of this fusion, labeling it *mountain jazz*, *postmodern national-romantic slop* and *barn-jazz*.”¹⁶ Finborud is quick to note, however, that “Regardless of this skepticism: the frenetic rhythms, harmonies and sound textures of the hallinger, springleiker and reinledere [all traditional Norwegian peasant dances] contain clear similarities to bebop, calypso, free jazz and impro-jazz [sic]. And the *blue tones* of the bårsulls and psalms clearly resemble jazz ballads and the simple motifs of cool jazz.”¹⁷ Just as Nazi occupation had sparked an interest in Norwegian folk culture during the 1940s, the period of political and social change that followed the turbulent 1960s prompted a similar examination of the country’s ethnic musical roots. “This renewed interest in traditional folk culture – both music, dialects, and traditional bunad costumes – was no coincidence,” writes Finborud. “It accompanied a period of political struggle in the run-up to the referendum of 1972 when a majority of Norwegians voted no to joining the European Federation (the European Union).”¹⁸

¹⁶ Lars Mørch Finborud, liner notes for *Black is the Color of My True Love’s Hair: A Selection of Norwegian Folk Jazz 1971-1977*, various artists. Plastic Strip PSPCD712, 2009. Italics in original.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

It was Jan Garbarek who brought a large measure of respectability to these folk explorations. Garbarek's early forays into this repertoire of Norwegian song assisted in "his development of a local and ethnic identity."¹⁹ The Norwegian folk music scene, which had benefitted from the song-gathering work of pioneering Norwegian ethnomusicologists, grew more attentive to Garbarek's explorations of indigenous repertoire and by the mid-1970s a major label crossover was inevitable. Garbarek appeared on an album conceived as a deliberate synthesis of jazz and folk music, *Østerdalsmusik* (Eastern Valley music), which was released in 1975 and made reference, in title and tunes, to a classic anthology of Norwegian folk song compiled by musicologist Ole Mørk Sandvik. The musicians involved in the project studied the notated songs extensively and delved into the social and political history of the Østerdalen region, as there were no recorded examples of the traditional songs. The album is one illustration of this fusion and "shows that there was contact between jazz and folk-music circles."²⁰ Finborud describes the resulting LP as "the milestone of Norwegian folk jazz with its experimental arrangements and sober cover photo of a traditional Skjoldelue (hat) from Østerdalen."²¹

Garbarek was one major catalyst for this fusion of styles and musical constellations, and he would continue to examine folk elements on an even broader scale; arguably, today Garbarek is best known as a "world" or folk musician. The use of folk elements inspired other cross-cultural collaborations between jazz musicians, and "the ethnic input from many lands and music cultures could widen the scope of the language

¹⁹ Holt, "Jazz and the Politics of Home in Scandinavia," 69.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Finborud, liner notes.

of jazz, giving new stimulus through the use of new instrumental colors and more unusual time signatures.”²² James Dickenson concludes, “Norwegian jazz has never lost contact with its roots, both classical and folk. Norwegian folk music was just one element, albeit a major one, in the unfolding of the history of Norwegian jazz in the sixties, seventies and later.”²³ Indeed, as Finborud tells us, “For a while, almost every Norwegian jazz record contained at least one folk song, from mainstream artists to avant garde bands.”²⁴

In any consideration of a local, regional, or national identity, care must be taken to address the current state of transcultural globalization that has come to dominate recent political discourse. The world finds itself confronting the “stretching, blurring, fragmentation, doubling, and multiplication of previously ‘fixed’ and ‘stable’ national (or regional and national) identities.”²⁵ Culture and information co-exist in a “complex scenario of hybridization.”²⁶ A jazz lens presents a special opportunity to analyze and unpack the implications of a hybrid global culture where no influence is too far afield and musical genres like Swedish death metal and Bolivian panpipe music can gain popularity in Japan. Music in general can serve as a laboratory for concepts of cultural exchange and in the modern day has increasingly resembled a collage or pastiche of stylistic features and national signifiers that identify with a people, a culture, and the geographical spaces that shape those groups. The archaic, broad and unspecific genre category of “world music” does nothing to capture this pluralism, yet has persisted in popular media. At the

²² Dickenson, “The Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz,” 85.

²³ Ibid., 87.

²⁴ Finborud, liner notes.

²⁵ Ignacio Corona and Alejandro L. Madrid, “The Postnational Turn in Music Scholarship and Music Marketing,” *Postnational Musical Identities* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 9.

²⁶ Ibid.

same time, the advent of streaming music has broadened musical palates worldwide, rendering traditional notions of genre even more obsolete.

The presence of the ECM-mediated Nordic sound implies a strong musical connection to the geographical attributes of Norway (realized through timbre and improvisational styles) and the cultural/ethnic attributes of that nation as expressed through the liberal adoption of folk music elements function as markers of a jazz identity for Norway. This identity has been cultivated and developed since the late 1950s, with the rise and fall of concurrent conceptual and philosophical movements within jazz practice and jazz criticism. Jazz has enjoyed sustained popularity in Norway since the Norwegian style began to appear in the early 1970s, and current jazz musicians can enjoy significant financial support from the Norwegian government, which encourages the continued development of jazz in Norway. I examine this dynamic briefly below. This factor also shapes the Norwegian jazz identity, as financial security for jazz musicians allows them to continue to experiment and shift genre boundaries while referencing the spacious timbral palettes and collective memory of the earlier generation.

The traditional notion of improvisation holds that the practitioner is “telling a story” through their instrument, constructing a coherent individual identity based on their tendencies and patterns. “Jazz discourse valorizes the trope of storytelling as a metaphor for improvisation,” writes George Lewis, “but...non-US jazz stories are very different from the stories familiar to US followers of the genre.”²⁷ American jazz, with its connotations of freedom and a traditional historiography centered on individualism and the solo storytelling prowess of virtuosos, continues to function in this manner, while

²⁷ Lewis, “Foreword,” *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*, xi.

European jazz stories are more often told on behalf of the group, with no one musician elevated to a position of superiority. Jazz has faded from the popular American consciousness even as it has gained more ground in academic institutions and as a form of cultural ambassadorship. It would be foolish to assume that those jazz connotations of freedom and rugged individualism would somehow translate into greater prestige or popularity among the notoriously fickle American musical public.

Yet, jazz is embraced across Scandinavia, where this music has taken on a reshaped, repurposed identity in a new space. Each of the Scandinavian countries produces music that conforms to its own local ideals; in this way, “Nordic” is not the most efficient term as it implies a homogenized sound across all of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland. In fact, each of these countries has a distinctive jazz identity to explore, with varying influences and priorities shaping the musical output of musicians in a given country.²⁸ Norway’s emphasis on tradition and folk elements sets it apart from its neighbor nations; this is in part an artifact of musical nationalism as embraced by the Romantics. In Norway, folk song collectors of the nineteenth century are still regarded with reverence, and concert composer Edvard Grieg is perhaps the most famous native son. Norwegian jazz musicians “turn to folk music because it is considered more authentic than popular music and because it has power in vernacular and official canons. Folk music found its way into jazz education at an early stage.”²⁹ Perhaps the occupation-era recovery of traditional folk songs and group singing was still on the minds of music educators when the first Norwegian music education programs emerged following the

²⁸ For a more in-depth exploration of the various Scandinavian dialects, see Bohlman and Plastino’s *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*; the 2019 anthology *The History of European Jazz* edited by Francesco Martinelli; Jari-Pekka Vuoreia’s *What About Jazz in Finland and Finnish Jazz*; as well as *A Smörgåsbord of Sound: A Survey of Modern Jazz in Scandinavia (+ Finland), 1949-1980* by Tony Adam.

²⁹ Holt, “Jazz and the Politics of Home in Scandinavia,” 68.

defeat of the Nazi regime. This fascination with folklore and folk culture is the ultimate Norwegian expression of nationalism.

This is a different type of identity, particularly compared to the jazz identity of a nation like Sweden, which had more associations with the nation-state itself—a musical expression of post-war patriotism—than it did with the material culture and traditions of that nation. This can be observed in the marketing of Swedish records from the 1960s, which often make explicit reference to the “Swedishness” of the music contained within. Swedish jazz references the political sovereignty of that country, while Norwegian jazz instead makes reference to the people themselves, the folk culture of Norway, and the physical spaces that form a Norwegian image of home. Norway’s unique jazz identity is constructed at the intersection of American avant-garde practices and indigenous folk character, with none of the overt patriotism seen in other Nordic countries. It is an alternative approach to nationalism, in which a distinctive identity is born but remains open and receptive to influences from all comers. This molecular structure has produced the Norwegian jazz organism, and its various markers of identity. The fundamental dialogue and exchange with American avant-garde practitioners is a major component, with Fabian Holt explaining, “indigenous folk music had a powerful appeal precisely as a vehicle for finding spiritual depth and originality in relation with American jazz.”³⁰ Norwegians instead leveraged their own culture and history in the service of constructing a jazz style of their own, one that reflects the essence of the nation instead of the patriotic symbols and signifiers of that nation.

³⁰ Ibid.

The practitioners of this Norwegian style of jazz were, according to Holt, “some of the greatest artists in the country” who conceived of “artistic models that would expand the boundaries and feed a long-term development of jazz indigenities in Norway.”³¹ This development is ongoing, with a broad pluralism of styles—including electronic dance music, sampled sounds, and progressive rock—beginning to infuse the more traditional Nordic sound of the 1960s and 1970s. Nonetheless, notes Holt, “Norway is the only country in Scandinavia in which musicians with wide international recognition have continued to draw on the folk music of their country and have identified with its language and nature.”³² Though currently active Norwegian jazz outfits may not directly reference Norwegian folk tunes à la Jan Garbarek, the atmosphere and spirit of the folk-infused works of Garbarek’s output live on in the experiments of contemporary musicians. This Nordic sound has taken on a new dimension with the advent of nu-jazz, a genre with an expansive, cinematic aesthetic characterized by electronics, meticulously arranged instrumental parts, and industrial dance beats mingled with freely structured improvisation. This genre and the current scene in Norwegian jazz are addressed below.

In his 1983 book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson examines the roots of nationalism and the idea of nation, and proposes that a nation “is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”³³ Thanks to these external factors that unite individuals under a common banner, nations form and acquire identities from their people, and though these identities are malleable, “the nation is

³¹ Ibid., 71.

³² Ibid.

³³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso Books, 1983), 5-6.

always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”³⁴ For Anderson, nations are natural extensions of ancient religious communities, invented kinship shared by people who are otherwise unconnected to one another. This kinship and sense of community is necessary for the formation of a national identity, as is the idea of self-identification. Members of these groups self-identify and are rallied by shared norms, customs, symbols, culture, and language. Significantly, when human beings organize themselves into communities with people to whom they are not related, music is one of the activities that can foster in-group bonding better than nearly any other, with the possible exception of religion. A nation’s sovereignty is vital to its identity; nations that have languished under foreign rule generally take longer to assert a distinctive cultural identity.

Norway has been historically ruled or occupied by other nations and did not obtain independence from Sweden until the nineteenth century. Consequently, Norway’s concept of national identity focuses on those aspects that were not a reflection of political sovereignty, but a reflection of the Norwegian people and their shared culture. This remained true even throughout the period of Nazi occupation; it was Norwegian folk customs and culture that were doggedly maintained in the face of encroaching Nazi assimilation. Nations and their accompanying identities provide a sociological way to view the passage of time and the pressure of history on groups of people. As Anderson writes, the nation “is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000-odd fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one

³⁴ Ibid., 7.

time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity.”³⁵

Anderson traces the expansion of nationalism to several major shifts in human thinking that occurred around or shortly before the Renaissance. The decline of monarchic authority and the rise of written vernacular languages created new identities and communities around which the commoners of Europe could organize themselves. Language, Anderson contends, is one of the most significant markers of national identity. As the use of written Latin declined throughout Europe and the printing press facilitated broader production of documents, the number of printed books increased, and many of these printed materials were in languages that quickly became standardized for written communication, in contrast to the dozens of variations and dialects of spoken vernacular languages. “These print languages,” writes Anderson, “laid the bases for national consciousness...they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars...fellow readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community.”³⁶

For Anderson, “The lexographic revolution in Europe...created, and gradually spread, the conviction that languages (in Europe at least) were, so to speak, the personal property of quite specific groups – their daily speakers and readers – and moreover that these groups, imagined as communities, were entitled to their autonomous place in a fraternity of equals.”³⁷ By the same token, the spread of musical styles beyond national

³⁵ Ibid., 26.

³⁶ Ibid., 44.

³⁷ Ibid., 84.

borders enabled musical communities to take on identities of their own, based not only on national characteristics but also on shared musical interests. The advent and spread of recordings during the early twentieth century meant that any recorded style could land in any corner of the world, and any musician hearing those recordings was free to learn from them and communicate in the styles they featured. The general broadening of musical communication that began in the late nineteenth century proved significant in sculpting national musical identities, evolving into the present-day pluralism of musical styles and the vast influence of global music genres on American popular music, as well as the broad embrace of American styles like rock and the blues in all corners of the planet. That there is an annual jazz festival in Kathmandu, Nepal, is a testament to the malleable borders of music in the twenty-first century.

In a parallel to Anderson's work, Susan McClary investigates identity from the perspective of Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg, who rose to compositional maturity in the late nineteenth century when the Norwegian intellectual fashion was for traditional music of the homeland and everything "folk." Grieg's ascendance came at a serious time for Norwegian identity. "Nothing less than national autonomy was at stake, and some of Grieg's closest associates participated passionately in the debate over the forging of a standard language for Norway. Writers such as Ibsen drew on regional folklore, and collectors went out searching for the songs and dances of rural people."³⁸ The folk fascination that characterized the Romantic period found a foothold in Norway, and a celebration of rural character followed. The educated elites of Oslo were interested in the dances, songs, and lore of farmers and shepherds who lived above the Arctic Circle.

³⁸ Susan McClary, "Playing the Identity Card," 218.

Though trained in the dominant style of the era—the German style of Romanticism as practiced in Leipzig—Grieg recognized the urgency of the surge towards Norwegian nationalism. He “gradually became convinced of the importance of marking some of his music as specifically Norwegian.”³⁹ Grieg’s forays into distinctly Norwegian music brought him international prestige, though he is now remembered strictly as a Norwegian nationalist, despite a more cosmopolitan body of work overall.

Grieg, however, was not immediately familiar with the ethnic sound of his people; “he consulted ethnographic collections, visited regional folk festivals, and even commissioned colleagues to make transcriptions he could use for his settings.”⁴⁰ McClary writes that his letters show the intense research and work he invested in these compositions. Grieg’s devotion to cultivating Norwegian nationalism in his concert music resulted in his recognition as the token Norwegian composer in the Western classical canon. “Playing the identity card,” as McClary puts it, impacted Grieg’s eventual reputation:

As Grieg knew, the nationalist trick had worked magically once: the early German Romanticists had trafficked in folklore in constructing their own style, which separated them from the Italian and French idioms that had long dominated European music. But the Germans somehow managed to persuade the international community of the universality of their own nationalist project and then defined all other nationalist agendas as parochial. Consequently, the mainstream happily consumed Grieg’s folk-based music as one might collect postcards from exotic sites, but it minimized the significance of his unmarked music.⁴¹

Grieg’s work is a fusion of the continental European classical style favored in Germany during the nineteenth century and the modal, sometimes tonally ambiguous and

³⁹ Ibid., 219.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

rhythmically boisterous Hardanger fiddle music of Norwegian peasants. Grieg was forced to reconcile his Germanic musical training with the theoretical realities of the indigenous music of his homeland, encountering sonorities and altered scales he had not heard before. Writing to a colleague about the use of a raised fourth scale degree in a particular fiddle tune he had transcribed, Grieg noted, “This phenomenon is something that should be researched. The augmented fourth also occurs in peasant folk songs. It is a holdover from one or another of the old scales. But which one?”⁴²

The issue of identity in Grieg’s piano transcriptions of these fiddle tunes comes from the vastly differing utilities posed by the musical dialects in use, and how Grieg responded. The fiddle tune was designed to accompany dancers, and like a great deal of folk music from various parts of Europe, it showcased flexible dance rhythms, repetition in structure, and the use of modal scales. The composer struggled to reconcile the peasant tunes with his Austro-Germanic training. “Grieg’s musical language was profoundly teleological whereas the music he sought to adapt (like most dance music) fostered a temporality focused on the body in the present moment.”⁴³ The essence of Norwegianness in these fiddle tunes is the aspect of the music that was least Germanic. Grieg’s achievement was finding a way to navigate between the two systems of musical vernacular, reconciling his own training in an intensely structured Austro-Germanic tradition with a looser, more limbic style of indigenous musical expression with which he shared ethnic roots.

Grieg’s “approach to [his] native folk music clearly anticipated the working methods of the school of jazz arranging which evolved in both America and Scandinavia

⁴² Edvard Grieg, letter to Johan Halvorsen, 6 December 1901, in *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*. Finn Benestad, ed. (Oslo: Peer Gynt Press, 2000), 349.

⁴³ McClary, “Playing the Identity Card,” 222.

in the 1950s and 1960s,” argues James Dickenson.⁴⁴ He points to Grieg’s rediscovery and translation of “rhythmic and melodic dialects gleaned from the indigenous Norwegian folk music and folk dance, dialects which have interested succeeding generations of jazz musicians, much of whose music has its roots in dance.”⁴⁵ The manner in which Grieg fused German style with Norwegian peasant dances shares some affinities with how Norwegian jazz musicians operate in practice, as using folk materials as a basis for improvisation is one of the defining characteristics of their national style. Dickenson cites one particular theoretical example: “The rather free treatment of the chord of the dominant, both in isolation or as a chain of sevenths, e.g. as in 'Siri Dale Song', Op. 66, nr. 4 was for Grieg a compositional effect rather than a cadencing device, influencing the French piano school, as well as the progressive school of jazz arranging and composition from the 1940s and 1950s and later.”⁴⁶

Dickenson also argues that Grieg’s folk-inspired use of modalism and unconventional harmony foreshadowed later developments in the jazz of the 1950s and beyond: “In his frequent juxtaposition of major and minor triads and their associated modal sevenths Grieg was anticipating the use of such compositional and performing techniques in jazz.”⁴⁷ Whether or not twentieth century musicians were directly influenced by Grieg, it is significant that some of the ethnic materials introduced by Grieg into his continental idiom also appear in post-World War II jazz, and reemerge in the folk-influenced work of improvisers like Jan Garbarek. Norwegian jazz musicians have long invoked a feeling of place in their music, even before they began to utilize folk

⁴⁴ Dickenson, “Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz,” 53

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 54.

materials in their improvisations. Timbral colors and instrumentation can also call to mind the wind whistling across a frigid Norwegian landscape, and Jan Garbarek's flute playing on some of his early records induces a folk atmosphere.

Music is a socio-linguistic construct that is consistently analyzed in popular culture as if it were a common tongue. As means of communicating shared aesthetic values, particularly emotional ones, music can be viewed as "universal." Yet, even discounting the various and diverse tuning systems, instrumental families, and musical forms found throughout the world, the presence of regional, local, and micro-dialects in musical performance renders any claim of universality an oversimplification. Musical styles participate in the construction of national identities because they become, as Anderson contends, "the personal property of quite specific groups," and this specificity is fundamental to creating the imagined community. Some of these musical identities grow beyond their specific groups and come to be associated with the broader identity of a nation and that nation's shared cultural values. Yet, these identities originate on a smaller level, guided by shared characteristics and trends that are themselves shaped by the lives and history of the nation. Thus the idea of a stable musical identity is an illusion; as written language itself becomes more descriptivist, so too does music respond to the ways cultural forces are pushing it.

As identity can be reinvented to reflect new influences, it is always malleable and can take on abstract forms. When cultures collide, this process begins. In 1940s France, the collaborative element within the government began to appropriate jazz as a European creation, deliberately downplaying any aspects of the music that were perceived as "American" (specifically, African American), at the same time other fascist governments,

including the Nazis, decried the Americanization of Europe. This appropriation was propaganda, of course, a way to prove that genius came innately from Europeans and that any resemblance borne by the music of “savages” was a vulgar theft. Yet some Modernist composers simply used the musical materials of jazz to shape in their own idiom, and chose certain salient features and using them in a neoclassical spirit. An earlier example of the abstraction of particular identities can be found in the life of American composer Aaron Copland and his work with French pedagogue Nadia Boulanger.

Annegret Fauser has discussed Copland’s work with Boulanger and her “cultural mediation” that “influenced her part in the construction of Copland as an ‘American’ composer.”

This is particularly evident in her incorporation of jazz in an almost abstract compositional manner, much in the vein of her neoclassicist aesthetic. One of the consequences of this appropriation of jazz in the spirit of neoclassicism led both her and her pupils to separate the musical elements of jazz from its racial and historical origins in order to create an abstract component of national identity formation.⁴⁸

Writes Fauser, “The question of Copland’s national identity as a composer also becomes a test case in exploring the vexed issue of identity in music.”⁴⁹ She examines the transcultural process by which someone like Copland could “Americanize” his music while living in Paris and suggests that “Copland’s European experience should be interpreted as the learning of a set of cultural practices that he appropriated in response to external nationalist identifications of culture...[his] identity as an American musician reflects not only his own national self-image but also the transformative effects of the

⁴⁸ Annegret Fauser, “Aaron Copland, Nadia Boulanger, and the Making of an ‘American’ Composer,” *The Musical Quarterly* 89 (2006), 526.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 525.

French gaze.”⁵⁰ European perceptions and interpretations of jazz helped to shape the music as it was developed by Europeans themselves; and in time jazz came to form a component of a broader identity—an aesthetic one—for non-Americans.

During Copland’s time in Paris, jazz “interfaced with modernist music more effectively in Europe than it did in the United States.”⁵¹ Copland was acquainted with Darius Milhaud during his time in France, and was said to be impressed with Milhaud’s *La creation du monde*, an early fusion of modernist techniques and jazz style. Some of the other members of Les Six experimented with jazz in their works, and throughout Paris a chamber style of pseudo-jazz grew more popular. Even Igor Stravinsky flirted with abstract jazz elements in several works. Among the Paris elite, jazz was both embraced as trendy and decried as savage noise, and continued to represent a primitivism-tinged idea of Americanization in music.

This framework enables examination of the ways that national identity can be formed around a cultural artifact that is not organic to that nation, and how music that comes from somewhere else can find a new sense of home far from where it was born. The case of jazz in Europe, and the European attitude of curiosity and fascination with this strange American import, is not the only example of a musical style finding a new home abroad. In her book *Intimate Distance*, Michelle Bigenho writes about the popularity of traditional Andean music in Japan. She describes her book as an effort to “unpack the meanings behind playing what might be called ‘someone else’s music.’”⁵² Her ethnography of Bolivian musicians who perform traditional panpipe music in Japan

⁵⁰ Ibid., 526.

⁵¹ Ibid., 531.

⁵² Michelle Bigenho, *Intimate Distance: Andean Music in Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 2.

shows how these musicians must live out more than just the music of their culture; they are called upon as symbolic representations of South America, and perform in traditional regalia during their Japanese tours. Japanese audiences, Bigenho writes, have come to expect this imagery in these performances.

A parallel exists in the commentary of jazz musicians who performed for European audiences. Dexter Gordon commented on the expectations European audiences held towards black jazz musicians, that their blackness was a marker of authenticity and contributed to the image of the suave black entertainer as superior in all aspects of jazz performance. Jack Lind, a writer for *Down Beat*, noted that European audiences were quite vocal about this assumption, and if an American jazz musician was considered better than a European one, African American jazz musicians were considered even better. There are many layers of cultural identification that foreign audiences may attach to an indigenous musical practice, shaped by context. Transcultural practices like the one in Bigenho's book rely on mutual fascination and interest, the recognition of value in the cultural artifacts of the "others." Perhaps the adoption of a foreign musical style in a new land is more a reflection of the way music fosters meaning in a sense of community. Bigenho's work begs the question: is jazz someone else's music, or does it belong to everyone?

In a 1925 speech at a dinner held in her honor, Nadia Boulanger addressed the guests on the matter of American traits and identity in music:

I would say they [American composers] are distinguished by a very marked feeling for the rhythmic element of composition and for the cultivation of individuality... These things lead to the creation of a type of composition which will eventually be recognized as distinctly American. Would jazz be considered a distinctively American musical expression? I am sometimes asked. Yes, of course it would; that is, it expresses a certain part of American

feeling... It will not necessarily be a basis for American music, however.⁵³

These case studies are various windows into the complicated nature of identity, and the ways that language and music assist in constructing avenues of self-identification. Boulanger admitted that jazz contained within it the essence of an “American feeling,” but then conceded that American music need not reference jazz to be considered American. Edvard Grieg consciously sought to reinvent himself as a composer of Norwegian music, and was intrigued by the theoretical differences in the music of his homeland and the Germanic literature he learned in Leipzig. Both wrestled with the tension of formal systems suddenly ambushed by the freedom of the folk, the homegrown, the unusual sounds, the corporeal rhythms, and what it all meant. Both parsed out a national identity from new sounds; Grieg with the peasant dances of the far north, and Boulanger with the modernist craze for jazz.

Boulanger and Copland made an abstraction of the “authentic” music that was distinctive to Copland’s country; he stripped his music of any overtly African inflections in favor of a polished facsimile. In so doing, he asserted himself an American composer while both acknowledging his debt to jazz and keeping its racial subtext at a distance. Grieg grappled with his own education and the peasants’ augmented fourths that seemed so exotic to the establishment. His training had not prepared him to capture those elements of his native song that defied Western convention. “If he had lived another decade,” notes McClary, “Grieg would have witnessed the rise of a modernism that would embrace precisely the ‘primitivist’ elements that make the *Slåtter* [fiddle tune] still

⁵³ Nadia Boulanger, speech reprinted in “Predicts National School of Music: Nadia Boulanger, French Teacher, Foresees a Distinctly American Type,” *New York Times* (2 January 1925), 19.

sound so startling.”⁵⁴ For James Dickenson, artists like Jan Garbarek inherited the mantle of Norwegian musical folklorist from Grieg. Garbarek and the other American-influenced avant-garde players

removed much of the cloistered reticence which had earlier been a hindrance in getting the best of the indigenous folk music out of the meadows and from the parlors it so rightly belonged in, and on to the world stage. Grieg had done the same for Norwegian folk music in the classical arena over 50 years earlier, and now it was the turn of the jazz *collegium*.⁵⁵

The embrace of modernist, even “primitive” indigenous qualities in music outside of the conservatory environment provided new outlets for musical nationalism. Identities coalesce around music in ways that reflect the constantly shifting nature of nationalism and national identity. The sound or aesthetic of a particular genre often comes to be associated with its place of origin, but any musical style or genre can be co-opted by anyone in any geographical place. Notion of identity will continue to shift and change in a world where, thanks to virtual communication platforms, a singer in Morocco can collaborate on an album with a saxophonist in Russia and a djembe player from Oregon.

Jazz survived the political and social tests of the twentieth century and was transformed; in the case of Norway, it flourished after the crucible of enemy occupation and oppression. It survived the Civil Rights movement and the “new thing” experiments, despite accusations of militancy from white journalists, and was transformed. If there is one careful conjecture that can be made, it is that jazz will endure and will most likely emerge transformed once again.

⁵⁴ McClary, “Playing the Identity Card,” 226.

⁵⁵ Dickenson, “Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz,” 88.

Chapter Nine: The Jazz Education Model in Norway: A Brief Case Study

The Nazi occupation of Norway reverberated throughout Norway's educational sector. As the nation recovered, some in the musical establishment attempted to re-establish the jazz tradition that had been pushed underground or relocated to Sweden. However, attempts to cultivate a Norwegian approach to the music languished for more than two decades after the war ceased. "Norway was disadvantaged as regards the foundation of an indigenous school for a period of no less than 20–25 years after the close of hostilities in 1945," writes James Dickenson. "Stockholm was the magnet which drew away from Oslo much of the top talent in Norwegian jazz."¹ Rebuilding the country's music education system meant recovering the jazz tradition that had just begun to flourish when the Nazis invaded. It took more than two decades for Norwegian jazz to assert itself as a distinctive dialect, and today jazz in Norway enjoys popularity on par with the heyday of the 1930s. Robust state financial support for musicians is one component of this recovery, discussed in the next chapter; the other is Norway's now-legendary jazz education system.

Some of the earliest music education degree programs in Norway were established in the early 1960s; a 1962 issue of *Music Journal* notes, "Early this summer Norway graduated its first class of music teachers trained particularly for school music teaching."² It was not long before jazz made its way into curricula, with teachers advocating for its inclusion because young people were already familiar with the genre. Some more progressive teachers called for a young person's music education to begin with jazz; then, "branching out from jazz, the youngsters would then become acquainted

¹ Dickenson, "Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz," 88.

² Edwin Liemohn, "Jazz in Norwegian Education," *Music Journal* 20 (1962), 66.

with the more serious types of music.”³ Today, Norwegian music education enjoys a positive reputation internationally. “Within the worldwide realm of music education practice and research, the Nordic countries have long featured and been praised as sites for open-minded inclusion of popular music into almost every type and level of formal music education.”⁴ It is significant that Norwegian teachers in the 1960s pushed strongly for the inclusion and even emphasis of popular music styles, particularly the notion of introducing students to the Western concert tradition after they had thoroughly studied more familiar pop music. The authors of a study on how popular music permeated the Norwegian academic sphere claim that popular music, including jazz, “held an almost hegemonic position within compulsory school music education for the last few decades.”⁵

By 1979, an academic jazz education program was in place in Trondheim, offering a music degree devoted to something other than the Western concert tradition. This was several decades after the codification of such programs at some American universities; the program was nonetheless a groundbreaking addition to music curriculums in Scandinavia and was the first of its kind in Norway. The University of Oslo permitted the study of jazz within its musicology degree program as early as 1974, and this was the case with other music schools in the country. This scholarly investment in popular music topics—jazz the most prominent among them—in many cases took place before the development of a jazz degree program. Nonetheless, jazz and popular music are popular topics for Norwegian academics, with a notable statistical focus on these genres in graduate scholarship. Analyzing the topics of 1,695 graduate theses on

³ Ibid.

⁴ Petter Dyndahl, Sidsel Karlsen, Siw Graabræk Nielsen & Odd Skårberg, “The academisation of popular music in higher music education: the case of Norway,” *Music Education Research* (2016), 1.

⁵ Ibid., 2.

music written in the country between the late 1950s and 2016, the authors of the above-cited study found that “there seems to be a large interest in jazz – modern or contemporary jazz constituting the by far most academised [*sic*] styles.”⁶ The authors cite 121 theses or dissertations on jazz topics, making it by far the most represented popular music genre among the 404 total theses on popular music.

Norway’s jazz reputation is built in part on the programs offered at its secondary institutions. In particular, the Trondheim Conservatory at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) has produced multiple generations of Norwegian avant-garde musicians who have made their mark internationally. This pedigree has been acknowledged in recent scholarship: “Young jazz musicians from this institution were the most important contributors towards the development of Norwegian jazz in the 1980s and 1990s, with Nils Petter Molvær (trumpet) and Tore Brunborg (saxophone) as the forerunners.”⁷ NTNU’s jazz program, the first in the country, has blossomed to include graduate studies in jazz performance and doctoral explorations of contemporary jazz. Alumni include multi-instrumentalist Mathias Eick, trumpeter and groundbreaking electronic musician Nils Petter Molvær, improvising vocalist Kristin Asbjørnsen, and saxophonist Eirik Hegdal, who began leading the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra in 2002. British saxophonist Iain Ballamy makes his living in Norway performing with Norwegian musicians and has remarked on the jazz culture that suffuses the country. He praised the creativity of his Norwegian colleagues, commenting, “They have a strong folklore tradition and a healthy nationalism of the kind we’ve lost in Britain. They’re well educated, fearless in their willingness to pile in with whatever’s happening and they’re

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Tveitan, “Reception of Norwegian-South African Musical Interactions,” 29.

supported by the state...I don't know what they give them for lunch in Trondheim, but it seems to do the trick.”⁸

Norwegian musician Rune Kristofferson is a veteran of the ECM label who branched out into the worlds of progressive rock and electronics after spending time with the Nordic sound. He founded his own label, Rune Grammofon, which specializes in experimental jazz, electronic music, and improvised music. ECM distributes Rune Grammofon's releases, and the younger label owes a certain debt to the ECM sound. Yet, Kristofferson's preference is for evermore experimental music that defies categorization. He describes the fundamental Norwegian concern as one of pluralism:

The most characteristic thing about these Norwegian musicians is their disrespect for genre. It's about people from jazz and more hard-core improvisational music, and from electronic music and rock, playing with musicians from other fields and trying to create something that's not very identifiable. The academies in Trondheim and Oslo have been important in that respect, encouraging musicians to step outside their own fields and experiment in ways that help them find their own voices.⁹

Luca Vitali echoes Kristofferson's comments in his own study of the Norwegian contemporary scene, concluding, “Norwegian musicians have never worried about respecting rigid stylistic categories or about emulating those who preceded them. Instead, they try to develop their own individually recognizable voices.”¹⁰

Trondheim's jazz program has attained a reputation as the nation's most prestigious jazz school; while Oslo's conservatory offers jazz studies, its main pedigree is in the classical tradition. The music conservatory in Bergen is considered the destination

⁸ Iain Ballamy, quoted in Richard Williams, “Norwegian Blues,” *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2005/dec/06/popandrock1> (accessed May 1, 2017).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Luca Vitali, “15 Emerging Jazz Musicians You Need to Know About,” *All About Jazz*, <https://www.allaboutjazz.com/15-emerging-norwegian-jazz-musicians-you-need-to-know-about-erlend-apneseth-by-luca-vitali.php> (accessed May 17, 2018).

for students who wish to learn traditional Hardanger fiddle technique, owing in part to Edvard Grieg's association with that city.¹¹ Jaga Jazzist, one of the leading Norwegian ensembles of the twenty-first century, discussed below, is frequently identified in popular media as an experimental jazz ensemble, where improvisation is sandwiched with various rippling instrumental textures and washes of synthesizer sound. The majority of Jaga's members are alumni of the program in Trondheim.

NTNU's program is world-renowned for the innovative approach to pedagogy. One common trait of NTNU graduates is their strong individuality as improvisers with a sense of musical flexibility and adventurousness that means no influence is off-limits. Graduates like Nils Petter Molvær have carved out a place for themselves by developing new fusions of genres and in some cases dispensing with genre entirely. Conservatory graduate Mathias Eick, a multi-instrumentalist who focuses on bass and trumpet, has recorded best-selling solo albums, served as a sideman for numerous Norwegian vocalists, and is a mainstay of Jaga Jazzist. The school's own website frames its Jazz Studies page with a confident declaration: "If you hear an amazing jazz musician in Norway, chances are he or she will come from the jazz line at NTNU."¹² There is a direct pipeline to the professional world for NTNU graduates, who enjoy not only the pedigree of the conservatory name but the connections established with Trondheim alumni throughout the Norwegian scene.

Even high-profile American news outlet NPR has covered the activity at NTNU, examining the Trondheim connection to the thriving current scene in Norway.

¹¹ The strength of the Trondheim jazz program serves as a kind of catchall for more experimental musics that struggle to find a home among more traditional genres.

¹² "NTNU: Current Creativity: Jazz." Translated from Norwegian. Norwegian Institute of Science and Technology, <https://www.ntnu.no/aktuelt/skapende/jazz> (accessed April 12, 2018).

“Innovation obsession is nurtured at the influential Trondheim Music Conservatory Jazz Program,” Michelle Mercer writes for *A Blog Supreme*, quoting the program’s distinctly Norwegian mission reflecting the “highly egalitarian culture in Norway where authority of any kind is always questioned and people’s general sense of self-value is high.”¹³ This is a social environment quite different from the American music education system, where conformity to notions of style and tradition is more often encouraged. Students at Scandinavian jazz festivals and workshops are encouraged to take risks without fear of criticism. It is simply accepted that free experimentation and a playful attitude in collaboration with others can produce transcendent results that enrich a student’s continued progress.¹⁴ Students at NTNU are free to construct their own curriculum based on their interests and career goals, a concept that Mercer recognizes as productive for a generation of young innovators who are not tied to a firm tradition. The Norwegian emphasis on the individual creativity of a musician as equal to the traditions of the past is an important part of NTNU’s educational philosophy. “Egalitarianism can give a young Norwegian jazz musician the conviction that his music is as original as Monk’s or Garbarek’s once was,” writes Mercer. “Even if the musician is wrong, false confidence may inspire him to create something interesting.”¹⁵ Christopher Porter, covering the Norwegian scene for *Jazz Times*, also cites NTNU as the hottest place in the country to study and learn jazz, quoting Rune Kristofferson: “Many of the young musicians have

¹³ Michelle Mercer, “How Norway Funds a Thriving Jazz Scene,” *NPR: A Blog Supreme*, <http://www.npr.org/sections/ablogsupreme/2013/03/26/175415645/how-norway-funds-a-thriving-jazz-scene> (accessed September 19, 2016).

¹⁴ An anecdotal story from University of Idaho jazz voice professor Kate Skinner described a vocal jazz workshop in Helsinki, where two participants were placed on stage and instructed to begin improvising without a rhythm section, taking cues from one another for pitches, rhythmic ideas, and timbre. Dr. Skinner later confided in the author, “I could never get American singers to do something like that.”

¹⁵ Mercer, “How Norway Funds a Thriving Jazz Scene.”

gone there. In Oslo the music academy is a bit more traditional; in Trondheim, with the jazz faculty, they have teachers who encourage students to be open to other types of music.”¹⁶

Graduates of the Trondheim jazz program report that the experience is “like being self-taught, but always being able to consult the teacher along the way if you’re stuck with something.”¹⁷ “The teachers up there can play American jazz, but they’re pretty open-minded,” says Per Zanussi, who studied bass at Trondheim.¹⁸ Zanussi’s statement reveals how some Norwegians perceive the American hegemony and their own place in rejecting these trends.

These jazz curriculums in Norway have conspicuously tended to side step the American jazz education model that emphasizes emulation of “great” players through study and imitation of their improvisational vocabulary. This American model is changing, but it has traditionally taught elements of jazz style and history through the performance of works typically composed between 1930 and 1950, with a focus on the big band repertoire. College students and some high school students are often given the opportunity to form small jazz combos, where the emphasis is on the hard bop and post-bop styles. While Norwegian musicians do train in the basic methods of jazz that were first adopted in Norway in the 1930s—they certainly learn all their blues scales—they do not emphasize any one historical period. The teachers at NTNU embrace the idea that “jazz must be understood as a set of shared practices and that the music’s history should

¹⁶ Porter, “Sound of Young Norway.”

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

not be written as a march of increasingly complex canonic recordings.”¹⁹ The Trondheim Conservatory offers courses on free improvisation and methods and techniques for approaching the practice, and the curriculum is strongly weighted towards fluency with electronics and contemporary music production techniques. NTNU permits its jazz students to specialize in any instrument for their jazz endorsement, another nod to the creative flexibility towards musical sounds so inherent in the work of earlier Norwegian musicians.

Musicians leave the Conservatory with a diverse set of skills thanks to a degree program that encourages students to stretch themselves. The curriculum is flexible, to represent the ways in which the students themselves are shaping the music. This is quite different than the predominant North American process of imitation and emulation of a specific set of musical features until a sense of proficiency is obtained. Rather than positioning themselves as part of a tradition, those teaching at NTNU emphasize innovation and collaboration among their students as a fundamental part of the learning process. In recent years, Norwegian jazz education institutions have initiated programs specifically designed to encourage girls and young women to participate in the country’s jazz culture, adapting to the shifting demographics of jazz performance. The overall educational model prioritizes innovation and engagement with a broad variety of musical styles and influences. While Norwegian jazz students are taught the chord-scale relationships so common in the North American system, the emphasis is placed more on the potential for new sounds and new ideas that each student possesses. This educational culture has no doubt contributed to the diversity of Norwegian jazz, while solidifying the

¹⁹ Bakkum, “Concentric Model for Jazz History,” 12.

country's jazz dialect without the need to invoke jazz tropes or clichés of the “jazz tradition” so rigorously enforced in the United States.

Chapter Ten: The Norwegian Jazz Economy

The Oslo Jazz Festival, held annually in Norway's capital city, has featured a "Nordic Showcase" event for several years. This is reserved for up-and-coming Scandinavian talent, and young musicians and ensembles submit recordings that are adjudicated by festival organizers. The festival's nurturing of homegrown musicians has come to encompass the entire Nordic region, including Denmark and Iceland. The festival's official website appeals to the next generation of jazz musicians in its call for entries: "Nordic Showcase is Oslo Jazz Festival's offer for young talented bands and music students."¹ It also presents a diverse array of featured artists and groups that stretch the traditional genre boundaries of jazz, even the plurality of styles in Norway.

The festival's 2018 opening concert was advertised as "A Tribute to Joni Mitchell," with arrangers and instrumentalists drawn from the Oslo music scene. The tribute concert featured musical direction by Anja Lauvdal, who was awarded the festival's Young Star award in 2011 for her participation in the Nordic Showcase. Commenting on Mitchell's music, Lauvdal observes, "It's so easy to hear what Joni Mitchell loves in her music. It seems she's always been keen on pursuing her own brand of musical adventurousness, and she constantly surprises me."² Mitchell may seem a surprising choice for a jazz festival kick-off event, but the selection demonstrates the Norwegian disregard for conventional genre boundaries. Lauvdal described Mitchell's continuing growth and exploration of jazz sounds after she ascended to fame as a folk singer. "She chose to explore new avenues and embrace change throughout her entire

¹ "Nordic Showcase." *Oslo Jazz Festival*, <https://oslojazz.com/nordic-showcase/> (accessed July 18, 2018).

² Ibid.

career, even though this was not always welcomed by the musical press and the public.”³

Lauvdal’s embrace of Mitchell as a spiritual predecessor to the populist thinking that defines the Norwegian approach speaks volumes about the continuing priorities of the country’s active musicians.

The Oslo Jazz Festival receives financial support from a wide range of corporate sponsors, including Jaguar automobiles, an Uber-like car-sharing service known as Bilkollektivet, and a major Norwegian cruise line, but is bankrolled primarily through the City of Oslo and the Norwegian Arts Council. Municipal funding of cultural events is not restricted to jazz; it is commonplace throughout Norway to see cities devoting a generous percentage of taxes to supporting cultural programs. Cities like Oslo, and cultural councils such as the Norwegian Arts Council, are known for their emphasis on inclusivity and social justice issues in their funding decisions, which reflects the general Norwegian sense of social equity.

In 2012, “Ten billion Norwegian Kroners – nearly 1.7 billion US dollars – was devoted to the arts...a lofty achievement and one that permits a country of approximately five million to make music an actual profession, placing culture up there with health care and education, right where it belongs.”⁴ It is possible for a Norwegian artist, fresh out of an MFA program, to receive significant funding from the Norwegian government, enough to make a living solely as an artist. Not only are there distinctive European dialects of jazz, the art form is openly supported and encouraged by governing bodies and

³ Ibid.

⁴ John Kelman, “Sound Check Norway: Music from Norway: Just How Important Is It, Really?” *Music Norway*, <http://musicnorway.no/2013/10/28/music-from-norway-just-how-important-is-it-really/> (accessed May 12, 2017).

official state institutions throughout Europe; in Norway, these institutions encourage musicians to explore the local dialect.

The Norwegian Arts Council is one of Norway's most important funding sources for artists. Their official website states, "In 2017, the Council will handle around €139 million in state funds earmarked for arts and culture, which is about 10% of the national cultural budget."⁵ The Council, in existence since 1965, "is in charge of a broad spectrum of administrative tasks and functions within the cultural field, including artists' grants, the Audio and Visual Fund and a number of other funding schemes."⁶ This is not the only government-backed organization that provides financial support to artists. Norway's Culture Ministry is the government's appendage for promotion of Norwegian artists and culture abroad. Significant grant funding comes from this government entity, and the Culture Ministry is the feeder for several organizations like the Norwegian Arts Council. The Ministry recently reiterated its commitment to artists, issuing a statement that "The government is continuing its efforts to secure wider funding for the cultural sector, with the aim of strengthening cultural life and reinforcing the sector's financial base."⁷ This statement was part of the announcement of additional funding for existing grant programs, including one designed to support artistic activities in the city of Svalbard: "The government has proposed an increase of NOK 5 million in support for Talent Norway, an uplift of some NOK 6 million for the gift reinforcement programme and a

⁵ "A Short Guide to Arts Council Norway," *Kulturradet*, <https://www.kulturradet.no/english/vis/-/arts-council-norway-main> (accessed May 28, 2018).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Broader funding for Norwegian art and culture." *Government.no*, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/flere-finansieringskilder-til-norsk-kunst-og-kultur/id2514485/> (accessed July 29, 2017).

NOK 2.5 million grant for art and cultural projects on Svalbard.”⁸ The emphasis on projects in various Norwegian cities is by design, as part of Norwegian social structure endows cities with the power to spend collective funds on artistic enrichment.

Michelle Mercer discusses the country’s social funding structure that enables jazz musicians to make a real living from practicing their art. “Public support,” Mercer writes, “has helped the country’s improvised-music scene expand from a handful of artists in the late ’60s to a thriving network of recording, performing and educational opportunities today.”⁹ In Norway, collective and cooperative living is a part of the culture, and Norwegians think nothing of devoting public funds to art. Jazz is one of the most popular creative endeavors in the country, and is robustly funded. The small city of Kristiansand, with a population of roughly 80,000, recently “sold off some of its energy stocks to start an arts foundation, Cultiva, with an endowment of 1.4 billion Norwegian kroner – currently the U.S. equivalent of around \$240 million.” Mercer explains that this is Kristiansand’s way of establishing itself as a place of culture, a force for the creation of art in the Norwegian idiom. The social democratic politics of Norway mean that its leaders strive to include even the most far-flung, rural parts of the country in expanding and exploring cultural offerings, demonstrating the egalitarian attitude for which Norway has become famous. Kristiansand used the Cultiva grant to “support individual artists, fund tours, and throw the annual Punkt Festival, where improvised music is performed on one stage, recorded, sampled, and then remixed using electronics on another stage in improvised fashion – a festival that makes creative, improvising musicians anywhere

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Mercer, “How Norway Funds a Thriving Jazz Scene.”

drool.”¹⁰ Norwegian jazz musicians can make a decent living from government endowments like the one in Kristiansand, but the broad demand for live music drives Norway’s incredible music festival scene.

“Norway has more than 400 music festivals, and 20 jazz festivals alone, offering substantial performing opportunities,” notes Mercer. “This is in a country with a population of just less than 5 million — roughly the population of Alabama.”¹¹ The Oslo festival is among the largest, but it faces stiff competition for prestige from the Molde International Jazz Festival, colloquially known as Moldejazz, founded in 1961 by promoters at the Storyville Jazz Club in Molde. Since 1964, the Norwegian government has provided financial support to Moldejazz, one of the oldest jazz festivals in Europe and one that has propelled Norwegian talent to greater heights alongside established stars like Chick Corea, Pat Metheny, Steely Dan, and Janelle Monáe.

The Norwegian government also subsidizes the overseas tours of Norwegian musicians, viewing them as cultural ambassadors for the Norwegian way of life and music. “Norway pays to export its art and culture,” Mercer notes. “The country’s pride in its improvised music means international jazz tours have a reasonably high rate of funding: In 2013’s first application round for overseas touring support, nearly a third of the jazz requests were granted.”¹² The Norwegian insistence on funding their musical culture remains despite changes in governmental leadership. Electronic improviser Hans-Peter Lindstrøm told *Pitchfork* writer Mark Hogan, “Whether we have a right or left government, there seems to be a consistency in the culture politics... Norway is one of

¹⁰ Ross Eustis, “Jazz Funding in Norway,” *EustisJazz*, <https://eustisjazz.wordpress.com/2013/04/07/jazz-funding-in-norway/> (accessed August 29, 2017).

¹¹ Mercer, “How Norway Funds a Thriving Jazz Scene.”

¹² *Ibid.*

the best countries in the world to live in, and the arts funding is an important part of the social democracy.”¹³

An English music critic writing for *The Telegraph* reacted to the gutting of similar funding in England, after Arts Council England slashed 340,000 pounds of funding from the country’s Jazz Services organization, which provides touring support and assists venues, in 2014. Ivan Hewett opined that, to the British, jazz was simply feel-good dancing music, and not “serious” art worthy of government investment. Hewett then compared the situation in England to the one in Norway:

The Norwegian state throws money at its jazz musicians, as it does at culture in general, and the reason is that jazz in Norway has almost no connection to the good-time, joyous swing roots of jazz. It’s more like a department of free-improvised “modern music,” which just happens to make use of trumpets and saxophones, along with synthesisers [sic] and all kinds of ethnic instruments. It takes itself desperately seriously, and the funders, duly impressed, come up with the cash.¹⁴

Hewett is correct in noting that Norwegian improvising musicians have achieved the right combination of aesthetics that appeal to the artistic and cultural zeitgeist. Artistic capitulation to patrons is a centuries-old tradition in music; here, the patrons in question are the Norwegian people, who continue to support exporting their country’s music and are willing to devote the funding necessary to encourage the development of Norwegian popular music. Hewett’s so-called “seriousness” of Norwegian jazz musicians isn’t mere art school posturing, but is founded on a deep ethic of collaboration and reinvention.

¹³ Mark Hogan, “How Countries Around the World Fund Music – And Why it Matters,” *Pitchfork*, <https://pitchfork.com/features/article/how-countries-around-the-world-fund-musicand-why-it-matters/> (accessed August 12, 2018).

¹⁴ Ivan Hewett, “Jazz: the Cinderella of Arts Funding,” *The Telegraph*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/worldfolkandjazz/10971234/Jazz-the-Cinderella-of-arts-funding.html> (accessed July 28, 2018).

To contrast the Norwegian funding situation with that of the United States, where the current population is roughly 322 million people, the National Endowment for the Arts, America’s primary source of government funding for artistic projects, had an annual budget of \$148 million in 2016. Eight million dollars went to music, with the majority being distributed to traditional concert music operations, opera companies, and established institutions like Jazz at Lincoln Center.¹⁵ Relative to population, this level of spending is dwarfed by the spending of several smaller European nations, and Norway is high atop the list. The editors of *Pitchfork*, who recently compiled data on government music funding, provided a chart that dramatically illustrates this discrepancy, noting that the dollar amounts listed are minimums:

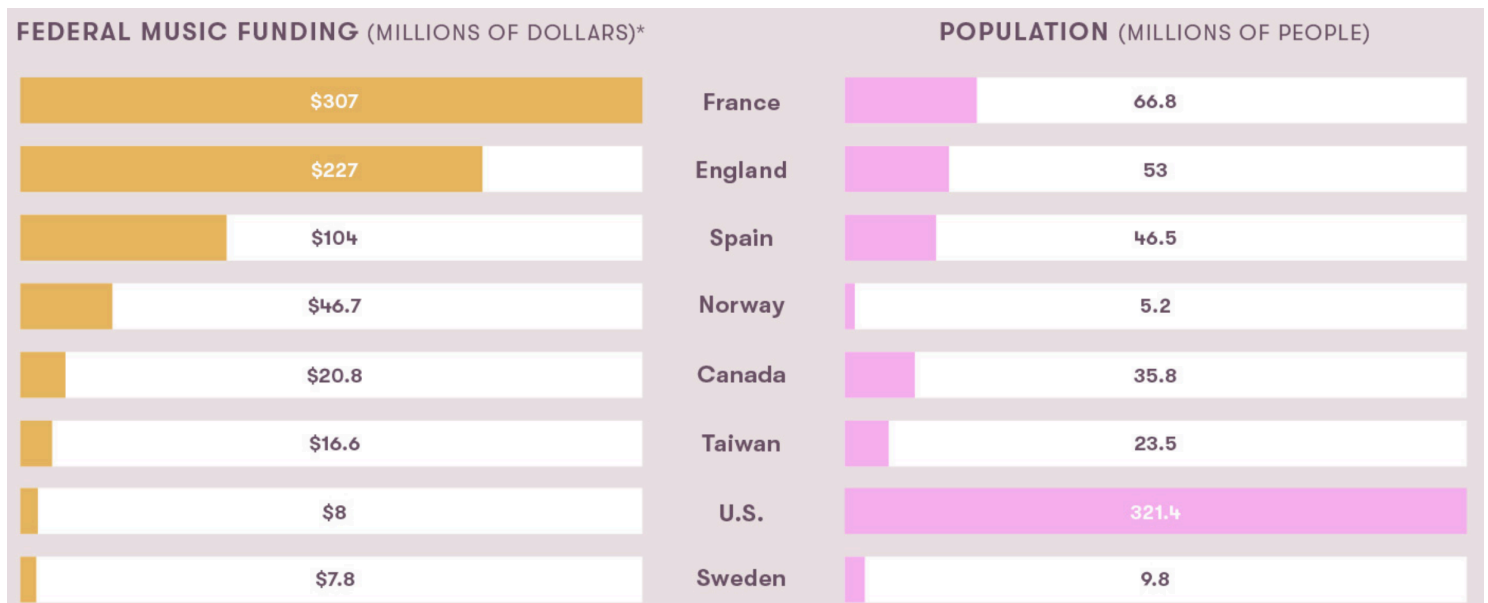


Figure 4: Chart from Hogan, “How Countries Around the World Fund Music.”

In the documentary *Jazzed Out Oslo*, Bugge Wesseltoft notes, “There’s been kind of a trend going on in Norway for many years. Jazz musicians always try to do their own

¹⁵ Hogan, “How Countries Around the World Fund Music.”

thing. There's very little of the traditional American style of playing jazz."¹⁶ The documentary is a glimpse into the jazz scene of that city, produced by a French director who interviewed several active Norwegian musicians. One musician featured in the film described Norwegians as the "outcasts" of Europe: as not fully European in their culture and customs. He noted that Norwegians did not have a long cultural history the way Sweden did; they had a much younger set of traditions. As outsiders to the "high culture" of a place like Vienna in the eighteenth century, Norwegians assembled a pastiche of various cultural markers and signifiers from their own folk traditions and brief history of sovereignty, and have created from this cultural *mélange* a modern genre of jazz that is still being defined by artists working today.

This feeling of being outsiders comes not just from occupation but also from centuries of rule by Sweden and later Denmark. Both of those nations imposed their culture and customs on Norwegians; as Norway inched closer to independence in the late nineteenth century, the folk movement exploded throughout the country. "Norway as the historical underdog in Scandinavia had had relatively little influence on its European neighbors where classical music was concerned before the emergence of Edvard Grieg in the latter part of the nineteenth century."¹⁷ All of these factors left Norwegians free to create their own musical identity from every conceivable source. They have refined and shaped their tradition into something Nordic, and they do so with the full support of their government, educational institutions, and cultural entities that recognize the importance of continuing to fund these Norwegian musical expressions.

¹⁶ Bugge Wesseltoft, quoted in Mathieu Mastin, *Jazzed Out Oslo: Ten Days Into Norwegian Jazz*. Kidam Studios, September 2011.

¹⁷ Dickenson, "Impact of Norwegian Folk Music on Norwegian Jazz," 217.

Chapter Eleven: Nu Jazz: Jaga Jazzist

The current state of Norwegian jazz can be characterized by the genre term recently coined to describe it: *Nu jazz*. This term is often used interchangeably with “future jazz” to describe a particularly Norwegian approach to contemporary jazz. Nu jazz can be post-minimalist in construction, with layers of pulsing rhythmic grooves provided by acoustic and electronic instruments, particularly synthesizers. It readily draws from genres like funk and soul, but always with an emphasis on free improvisation. This is a contemporary enhancement of the meandering, spacious collective improvisations set up on ECM albums in the 1970s. Trumpet player Nils Petter Molvaer is strongly associated with the Nu jazz sound and pioneered the use of electronics with a unique Scandinavian flavor that relies heavily on jazz fusion and drum machines. Another group, Supersilent, is made up of Trondheim graduates who push the boundaries of genre by melding their formal jazz backgrounds in improvisation with various synthesizers, electronic noises, and tape loops. These groups eschew traditional jazz structure – many of Supersilent’s works deliberately avoid any set forms – and create sculptural soundscapes through manipulation of various timbres.

Perhaps the most important Norwegian group credited with codifying this twenty-first-century Nordic Sound is Jaga Jazzist, a nine-piece collective led by siblings Lars, Martin and Line Horntveth and formed with several of their friends from the music conservatory in Trondheim.¹ Every member of the group plays multiple instruments. Trumpet player and bassist Mathias Eick, who left the group in 2015, is an alumnus of

¹ Line Horntveth, the group’s only female member, plays flute, tuba, and tenor horn in the group and also provides vocals and vocal effects on many of the group’s releases. Jaga Jazzist have frequently utilized heavily processed wordless vocals to add yet another layer to their instrumentation. The vast majority of their recorded output contains no lyrical content.

NTNU's jazz program and has since carved out his own successful solo career. Jaga Jazzist's approach is often characterized through comparisons, leading to critics describing them as something like Rush channeling Sufjan Stevens via Radiohead and Steely Dan. Jaga's music is difficult to categorize, and the band has embraced this approach. Jaga's multiple albums showcase a band with a broad populist approach to musical style and influence. Even the moderator of Jaga's official Facebook page shrugs and admits, "Sounds like...eh...Jaga," in the 'About' category.² The group's name translates roughly from Norwegian as "hunted jazz." The group is an ideal case study of the present state of Norwegian jazz and the ethics that contribute to the style of nu jazz.

Jaga Jazzist has always boasted eclecticism in their overall sound, but their recordings are polished and professional, and while the timbres of the improvising musicians sometimes possess the sculptural idiosyncrasy of earlier generations of Norwegians, Jaga's music tends to be very tightly wound and carefully arranged, with every contributing musician given an equally important role in the overall texture. Their more recent explorations of synth-inflected jazz are tightly arranged and intelligently orchestrated to exploit various jazz tone colors, though they are often associated with the progressive rock scene. Brian Howe has pointed out that the group "is among the leading lights of the new Scandinavian jazz, but their sound resonates strongly with North American-style post-rock, too."³ The band has acknowledged influences that transcend boundaries of genre and style; "despite the word 'jazz' in the nonet's moniker, its principle [sic] writer, multi-instrumentalist Lars Horntveth, has cited everyone from

² "Jaga Jazzist: About," *Facebook*, <http://www.facebook.com/jagajazzist> (Accessed July 18, 2018).

³ Brian Howe, "Jaga Jazzist: One-Armed Bandit," *Pitchfork*, <http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/13822-one-armed-bandit/> (accessed April 30, 2016).

Steve Reich, Rick Wakeman, Dungen and Spirit to Fela Kuti, King Crimson, MGMT and Air as influences on the group's last studio record, *One-Armed Bandit*.⁴ Howe observes that "each of their albums seems like a new negotiation between art music and pop music, as if they still aren't sure which kind of band they are, and how much they can get away with on either side."⁵ The group unapologetically utilizes a vast range of genre conventions and techniques in the service of forming an individual aesthetic that has come to be a vital part of the "nu" Norwegian jazz.⁶ Lars Horntveth has described his compositional approach as "about making classical music for my kind of people, if you know what I mean."⁷

Horntveth and the rest of Jaga Jazzist concede a debt to another American music tradition in their music, acknowledging Steve Reich on the track "Toccata" from *One-Armed Bandit*. The group has displayed a minimalist aesthetic on more than one of their many albums, but *One-Armed Bandit* was conceived in part as a tribute to the repetitive, transformational processes of minimalism, with a twist. "'Toccata,'" Horntveth told an interviewer, "is a complete Steve Reich dedication. On the album as a whole there are repeating horns on many songs that are rip-offs from that sort of thing...but in this case to call this music minimalist is far from what we are doing, as we're maximalist, if you like."⁸ Horntveth calls on the spirit of minimalist music—its accessibility, genre fusions like rock music, West African polyrhythm, and jazz all, and clear changes of pattern that

⁴ John Kelman, "Jaga Jazzist: Jaga Jazzist Live With Britten Sinfonia," *All About Jazz*, http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=44528#.U1XOB_IdV8E (accessed December 9, 2014).

⁵ Howe, "Jaga Jazzist: One-Armed Bandit."

⁶ The Norwegian word for new is "ny," so the label "Nu jazz" is likely a pun on the English word "new" with a Scandinavian twist.

⁷ Lars Horntveth, quoted in Ben Hogwood, "Interview – Jaga Jazzist." *Music OMH*, <http://www.musicomh.com/features/interviews/interview-jaga-jazzist> (accessed April 30, 2016).

⁸ Ibid.

even the untrained ear can discern—while declaring his own music as indicative of a “complex, melodic, and no bullshit attitude.”⁹ Horntveth and his bandmates strive for as much musical complexity as they can get away with without alienating their audience, and they frequently succeed. Though they do incorporate many genre conventions on *One-Armed Bandit* consistent with the Nu jazz label, minimalist techniques, a strong evocation of progressive rock, and nimble, almost Bach-like counterpoint are present throughout the album. There were, according to band members, so many tracks to mix for the album that the first engineer quit after suffering a bout of tinnitus. There are moments on *One-Armed Bandit* where the sheer number of musical layers is overwhelming, and at that moment, the band will take a sharp turn into new thematic and atmospheric territory. Each track features multiple soundscapes; some are almost purely electronic, while others unspool an electro-acoustic fusion that is quite unique to Jaga.

Describing *One-Armed Bandit*, Horntveth told an interviewer:

There is a tribute song to Steve Reich and there is one with a distinct Fela Kuti flair. But it is the concept of the slot machine, i.e. the arpeggio feel, that sort of permeates the album. I think people will be surprised; at the same time there are certain elements which are very familiar. It is definitely Jaga. Our concept has always been to make catchy jazz. This definition is wide though, and as we are so many – and since we are all multi instrumentalists – the possibilities are almost unlimited. We have this great privilege of being able to find the ‘vocalist,’ i.e. the melodic lead, anywhere, with any instrument or constellation of instruments.¹⁰

Many of Jaga Jazzist’s earlier releases emphasize free improvisation over written-out arrangements. Some tracks on earlier albums were simply recorded jam sessions, and others consisted solely of electronic blips and playful rap verses. *One-Armed Bandit* is

⁹ Lars Horntveth, quoted in Angela Shawn-Chi Lu, “Jaga Jazzist: Maximalistic,” *All About Jazz*, <https://www.allaboutjazz.com/jaga-jazzist-maximalistic-jaga-jazzist-by-angela-shawn-chi-lu.php> (accessed May 3, 2016).

¹⁰ Lars Horntveth, quoted in Christian Lysvag, “Jaga Jazzist: One-Armed Bandit,” <http://www.ballade.no/mic.nsf/doc/art2009052913183346071412> (accessed May 4, 2016).

more deliberately constructed, with Horntveth writing out the majority of the arrangements for the album's songs and giving more scrutiny to instrumentation, utilizing trombone, tuba, trumpet, organ, vibraphone, bass, and pedal steel guitar, as well as the Fender Rhodes piano. The slot machine device so prevalent in the album's aesthetic (and, of course, the album's title) appears as the persistent rolling arpeggios that permeate *One-Armed Bandit*. These are the tangible link to the minimalist devices of pioneering composers like Reich and Philip Glass. The slot machine metaphor is also present on the album art, with different editions of *One-Armed Bandit* displaying different stylized fruit symbols on the cover. The end of the title track even features the jingling of coins, perhaps a progressive rock nod to Pink Floyd.



Figure 5: One of the covers of the original 2010 studio release of *One-Armed Bandit*.¹¹

A critic writing for the *A.V. Club* noted that the slot machine aesthetic was an apt extra-musical device, and was compelled to pun, “Norway’s premier experimental jazz

¹¹ “One-Armed Bandit (album),” *Wikipedia*, Fair use, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27477569> (accessed August 8, 2018).

nine-piece cycles through an ever-shifting barrage of styles that frequently delivers big payouts.”¹² Critics often struggle to fit Jaga into any one genre, as the band nimbly negotiates the space between nearly all contemporary popular music styles and twentieth century art music. “As if it were easy,” writes Alex Franquelli, “to define an ensemble which has rewritten the history of European contemporary jazz by adding progressive, noise, classical and electronic twists and turns to the mix.”¹³ *One-Armed Bandit* was, at the time of its release, one of Jaga’s most populist albums, drawing on dozens of musical ideas from every conceivable influence. Some critics have argued that Jaga simply occupies their own niche, creating music for which there is no valid comparison, in Norway or otherwise. Horntveth’s comments on his varied influences reflect the band’s attitude towards the maximalist, “classical music for my kind of people” creative drive that has distinguished the group on the international jazz scene and allows them to reinvent themselves with each successive recording.

Horntveth’s mention of placing the melodic lead in any instrumental voice reflects one Nordic priority: the egalitarian nature of group interaction and improvisation. It also reflects the minimalist technique of phasing the melodic lead in and out of various instrumental voices, and the assorted fragments that coalesce into themes that are passed between instruments. This approach eschews the traditional development of a theme and instead ripples towards the gradual unfolding of what minimalism scholar Timothy Johnson defines as “an unbroken stream of rhythmic figuration flowing from the

¹² Chris Martins, “Jaga Jazzist: One-Armed Bandit,” *The A.V. Club*, <https://music.avclub.com/jaga-jazzist-one-armed-bandit-1798164402> (accessed April 18, 2018).

¹³ Alex Franquelli, “Jaga Jazzist: Starfire,” *All About Jazz*, <https://www.allaboutjazz.com/starfire-jaga-jazzist-harmonia-mundi-review-by-alex-franquelli.php> (accessed August 3, 2018).

beginning of the piece to the end.”¹⁴ These rhythmic figurations ultimately come together as melodies emerge from them. This concept of melodic lead also echoes the free jazz aesthetics of Ornette Coleman and Jan Garbarek, who upended traditional notions of instrumental hierarchies and allowed for roles to be swapped, flipped, and altered, allowing each musician to take their turn as the leader of a complex group interaction. For Jaga, musical themes are variously constructed from these rhythmic units, and these themes move from the background into the foreground and back again in diverse orchestrational combinations.

“Toccata” consists of persistent streams of notes, with multiple rhythmic layers that can be teased out of the overall texture. Much like Steve Reich’s conception of music as process, once “Toccata” has begun, the process of rhythmic repetition runs itself through the various instrumental timbres as the assorted ostinati interact. The piece also has an interesting formal structure: one twenty measure phrase in 3/4 time that is repeated three times; each repeat of the phrase adds a new rhythmic layer. The melody, insofar as there is one, is a repeated series of heavily accented quarter notes played by the low brass. The harmonic material of these layered ostinati exists only to provide clearly audible contrast between sections, as there is no melodic climax or goal-oriented harmonic progression to speak of in the piece. The closest thing to a melody in “Toccata” is Mathias Eick’s improvised trumpet solo that does not begin until the closing section of the piece (3:23).¹⁵ The solo soars over the incessantly rhythmic backdrop provided by the other members of the group, his lyrical playing offering a contrast to the jagged edges of

¹⁴ Timothy A. Johnson, “Minimalism: Aesthetic, Style, or Technique?” *The Musical Quarterly* 78 (1994), 748.

¹⁵ This description of this piece and Eick’s improvised trumpet solo refer to a live recording of the group performing “Toccata” in a church in Tønsberg, Norway. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28fk5jVxE2E> (accessed August 8, 2018).

the minimalist groove underneath. Eick does not play any stereotypical licks, but moves through a series of short motives that grow more elongated as his solo reaches its pitch climax. At 4:14, Eick plays a short, repeated figure and ends his solo on a questioning tone, before he picks up the string bass and contributes a new line to the already crowded instrumental texture.

The repetitive framework of “Toccata” provides a static, yet boisterously rhythmic, backdrop for the improviser. The piece resembles the free jazz of earlier generations in the degree of creative latitude afforded the improviser. Mathias Eick is free to meander through a newly created melody and deliberately contrasts his solo’s character with that of the rippling, percussive rhythms. The layers of unbroken rhythmic ostinati that fade in and out of the texture combine with the elongated low brass melody to effectively invoke the spirit of Steve Reich’s process music. Yet, all of the rhythmic layers are designed to provide an ideal backdrop for a more open sense of improvisation.

The title track from *One-Armed Bandit* has two recorded versions: an original 2010 album version and one that was recorded live in Oslo in 2012, featuring strings and additional orchestral winds courtesy of British chamber orchestra Britten Sinfonia, and released on Ninja Tune records in 2013. These fully orchestrated versions of many of Jaga’s most popular tunes feature lush string writing that underscores the rippling electronics and the spacious improvisations of the group’s soloists. *Live with Britten Sinfonia* showcases the instrumental abilities and arranging prowess of Lars Horntveth, Mathias Eick, and trombonist Erik Johannessen, who plays an extended free improvisation for the first several minutes of “One-Armed Bandit.” The composition itself is quite motivic and consists, like “Toccata,” of multiple repeated rhythmic

figurations, including a bass clarinet ostinato that Horntveth sustains for over three minutes as the only source of pitch material and tempo (very near 200 beats per minute) for Johannessen to work with. Several of these repeated ostinati, which again evoke the Steve Reich/Fela Kuti-inspired “maximalist” method of composing cited by Horntveth, are detailed in Figures 5-9. The vast, cinematic scope of the orchestral arrangements convey a Nordic spaciousness that is tempered somewhat by the persistent ostinati.

This live orchestral version of “One-Armed Bandit” opens with Horntveth playing a bass clarinet ostinato centered on G, shown in Figure 5:



Figure 6. Bass clarinet ostinato (transposed to concert pitch).

This particular riff appears on the original studio album, inspired by an improvised rhythmic idea on a brief jam session recorded as an album introduction by guest artists The Thing.¹⁶ Johannessen then spends several minutes exploring a few limited pitches, then expands and begins a series of vocalizations and growls through his trombone. Gradually, the strings and orchestral winds filter into the overall texture, providing a backdrop for Johannessen to explore, and slowly, more pitch material appears. The primary melody of the piece is finally heard around the four-minute mark, with the presence of copious E-naturals and B-flats suggesting the G Dorian scale (see Figures 8-

¹⁶ This jazz trio of Norwegians and Swedes obtained their moniker from a Don Cherry composition of the same name. Don Cherry’s influence is still deeply felt in Norway, and current nu jazz and future jazz artists frequently cite Cherry as the fundamental wellspring of their musical ethics. The Thing got their start when they collaborated on a recording project of Cherry’s compositions.

10). The entire, four-phrase melodic sequence repeats dozens of times throughout the piece.



Figure 7. The first phrase of “One-Armed Bandit” melody.



Figure 8. The second and third phrases.



Figure 9. Concluding phrase.

The piece is written in a fast triple meter, clearly intended to be felt in one, and the interlocking rhythmic figures combine with the use of a modal scale to occasionally lend the curious impression of a lost Ars Nova work, where instead of voices, a wide palette of instrumental timbres and electronic effects carry the complex contrapuntal interplay of modal motives. The fast waltz feel of the tune recalls, perhaps, a lilting peasant dance from the far north, lending the piece a sense of timelessness despite the presence of various anachronistic synthesizer sounds. The Nordic aesthetic of spaciousness is also present, with the sheer ambition of the orchestral arrangements conveying a powerful grandeur. Lush, low-register flute carries a repeated counter theme

that harmonizes with vibraphone and electric guitars, while other mallet percussion and trumpet outline elongated arpeggios underneath. String swells and waves of brass harmonies, provided by the chamber orchestra, amplify the tune's cinematic qualities. Many of Jaga's melodies possess a folksy simplicity, and Horntveth frequently constructs entire compositions out of motivic fragments that are sequenced through various slow-moving modal harmonies.



Figure 10. Cyclic counter melody from “One-Armed Bandit.”

By structuring their pieces around these pseudo-minimalist devices, and by utilizing modal scales and pedal points in lieu of harmonic changes, Jaga achieve a sense of stasis that is nonetheless expansive and evocative of Nordic priorities in jazz. They are also invoking the spirit of their jazz ancestors, the musicians who constructed a sense of Norwegianness around long drones and extended free improvisations while calling on influences that ranged from folk music to fusion. Jaga Jazzist is sustaining the Nordic tradition in a way that evokes the persistent Norwegian attitude of “anything goes” when it comes to genre and the value placed on individual creativity shining through, and being lifted by, the efforts of a collective. Given the indeterminate, modular nature of many minimalist compositions (Terry Riley’s *In C* is a great example), fusing improvisation with these techniques is a logical reflection of a free-influenced, post-minimalist jazz aesthetic that Jaga achieves on *One-Armed Bandit*. “Toccata” displays a sense of perpetual motion that has strong ties to Steve Reich’s composition techniques, in the sense that the piece is an unfolding rhythmic process that, once begun, runs itself. The

influential aesthetic principles of previous generations appear in Jaga's music in new ways: in the crisp, austere articulations and musical lines, the intricacy of group interactions, the extended improvisations that glide over polyrhythmic backgrounds, and in the way that any musical voice can find its place as the melodic "lead," as true egalitarianism in group communication, even for the tuba player.

Jaga Jazzist's most recent release is 2015's *Starfire*, which has been hailed by critics as one of the group's best recording endeavors, albeit one that can be mystifying to the uninformed listener. Critic Alex Franquelli maintains, "The album is ... at a median point between the discipline of classical jazz and its European erratic digressions."¹⁷

Starfire is yet another experimental trip through a specific sonic ideal, in this case, rapid electronic arpeggiations and a reference to a Japanese bullet train on the track "Shinkansen." Franquelli seems stumped as to what to call the music on *Starfire*. "Jazz, yes," he concedes, "but the methodical lack of control blurs the final result behind a mist of elegantly chosen detours."¹⁸ This lack of control may refer to the jarring way in which Jaga pivots from style to style, from electronics to acoustic sounds and combinations of both in novel orchestration, juxtaposing lyrical flute melodies with coarse tenor horn counter-lines. He seems to consider this a failing of the album on the whole: "The lack of a solid direction ends up confusing the less attentive listener."¹⁹ He is correct in insinuating that Jaga's music rewards more active sets of ears, and the group's wild excursions between styles and timbres can indeed be overwhelming to listeners expecting more meditative textures and aesthetics. Franquelli's observations are typical of critics

¹⁷ Franquelli, "Jaga Jazzist: Starfire."

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

who cover Jaga Jazzist; though they all concede that the group is the heir apparent to the Norwegian jazz tradition, they often struggle with the band's intricate and pluralistic craftsmanship. "Is this new(ish) formula appealing?" Franquelli muses. "Yes. Is it dragged for too long and does the band sit on its laurels? In a way they do."²⁰

Starfire is a logical culmination of Jaga's musical development, an album that integrates electronics and unusual orchestration in ways that are sometimes reminiscent of Duke Ellington's preference for odd combinations of instruments and unorthodox voicings, and do so more seamlessly than any of their previous works. It may be simpler to explain an album like *Starfire* in terms of its influences. The music on the album brings to mind Radiohead, Weather Report, the work of Pat Metheny in the 1990s and 2000s, and the music of electronic musician Tom Jenkinson, who records under the moniker Squarepusher. For critic Kristofer Lenz, the populist approach heard on *Starfire* allows Jaga to "continu[e] on their nearly two decade-long journey of re-shaping the sound of contemporary jazz."²¹ He aptly summarizes the band's approach in his discussion of the album's title track: "This is the Jaga Jazzist formula: Songs regularly run seven minutes or more and fill to the brim with more movements, tempo changes, and melodic eruptions than one can easily track."²² However, the band's fearless approach to their music, and the gamut of influences they employ—medieval modes, electronica, Don Cherry, minimalist structures—positions them as the most important group of contemporary Norwegian jazz musicians.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kristofer Lenz, "Jaga Jazzist – Starfire," *Consequence of Sound*, <https://consequenceofsound.net/2015/05/album-review-jaga-jazzist-starfire/> (accessed July 16, 2018).

²² Ibid.

Even when they do not directly access the avant-garde “free” aesthetic of Jan Garbarek, Terje Rypdal, and other early forces in Norwegian music, Jaga Jazzist nonetheless operates in the spirit of the Nordic sound and is emblematic of Norway’s national craze for improvised experimental music of all types. The group regularly sells out their European concert tours, but has made limited visits to the United States, citing the increased costs of staging American tours.

In summarizing the ethic of Nu jazz, musician and jazz festival director Jan Bang cites the importance of discomfort in order to grow: “I think it’s good that we as musicians improvise with electronics,” Bang told Michelle Mercer.

It puts you in a situation that you’re not necessarily comfortable with. It’s good for creativity. And you could always question people working with jazz, ‘How much is actually improvised anyway, or how many licks have you stolen from other people, being it Miles Davis or John Coltrane?’ So this is a new way of working with improvised music.²³

The modern Nu jazz scene continues to thrive in Norway, with many of the country’s 400 annual music festivals dedicated to amplified improvised music with a broad assortment of electronic instruments and acoustic sounds in every possible combination. For Norwegians, jazz is that music that is improvised in groups and that is informed by the aesthetic concerns of the earlier generation, but these present-day innovators are single-mindedly obsessed with further breaking barriers in the name of expression.

²³ Mercer, “How Norway Funds a Thriving Jazz Scene.”

Conclusion

Norwegians have incorporated jazz into the aesthetic of their national identity. The musical output of Norwegian jazz musicians reflects the vast geographical spaces of the country and the chilly austerity of fjords and ice fields. They draw on a rich history of folk culture, avant-garde artistic movements shaped by the pedagogy of African American musicians, and a distinctive individuality in improvisation that is nonetheless fully dependent on group interaction. Norway's educational system supports and nurtures experimentation in all forms of art, particularly jazz, and a current generation of Norwegian musicians continues to shape the Nordic sound by discarding genre boundaries and collaborating with musicians from all stylistic backgrounds.

The Nordic sound draws on several decades of experimentation and development on the part of the post-war avant-garde. The aesthetic was richly influenced by the work of Americans George Russell, Ornette Coleman, and Don Cherry, each of whom contributed something of substance to the fully formed Nordic sound. In the case of Russell, his unconventional approach to jazz theory and philosophies of liberation through limitations had a substantial impact on young Jan Garbarek, the Norwegian musician who would go on to embody the essence of Norwegianness in jazz through his idiosyncratic saxophone vocalizations. Coleman's virtues of group collaboration, of harmonic and melodic reinvention, and of the deliberate discarding of Western concert music strictures, resonated with a generation of Norwegian musicians who set about creating their own identity. These Norwegians ceased to imitate the commercial styles of jazz that were popular in the country before World War II and branched off in an entirely new direction of their own creation. Don Cherry was fascinated by the folk music of

Scandinavian countries and personally encouraged Jan Garbarek to experiment with the folk materials of his country in his improvisations. This folk element came to be crucial in the formation of the Nordic sound, and Norwegian folk culture is one of the strongest markers of Norwegian identity.

In Norway, there is no shadow of tradition that competes with new projects and ideas. Norway's educational system reflects the country's social and cultural goals, and from the beginning young jazz students are raised to believe that they are in dialogue with a tradition, not beholden to it. Norway's jazz scene is young compared to that of the United States, and yet it thrives on a mixture of innovation and public support. Norwegian jazz musicians are aware of their past, but keenly focused on reinventing their future. "Garbarek's legacy, along with the sheer youthfulness of Norway's jazz scene, has created an obsession with innovation. Today, many in the Norwegian jazz industry believe every note should be shiny-new; that the best concepts are the most outlandish ones and improvised music should advance faster than the speed of sound," writes Michelle Mercer in her examination of the Norwegian scene for National Public Radio.¹ Garbarek and his contemporaries were working with the influence of the black musicians who spread their avant-garde ideas throughout Scandinavia, and in the process abandoned forever the idea of imitating American jazz. More than nearly any other form of Norwegian music, jazz has solidified the Norwegian identity by expressing the qualities of egalitarianism, collective dependence, individual expression, and boundless creativity.

Identities are never static and, much like jazz itself, they are constantly reinvented and reshaped in response to external forces. In the present day, globalization is shaping

¹ Mercer, "How Norway Funds a Thriving Jazz Scene."

and changing identities faster than ever before, as the world grapples with a global economy and the far-reaching influence and nature of social media. Stuart Nicholson defines globalization as “the ever-increasing fast flow of goods, services, finance, and ideas across international borders and the changes in institutional and policy regimes at the international and national levels that facilitate or promote such flows.”² His mention of ideas is particularly relevant, as cultural ideas and cultural clashes have been expedited at the same time global finance and trade has exploded. Some scholars, like Nicholson and Heffley, recognize the globalization of jazz and describe it as another component of this rapid acceleration towards fewer borders, while others describe jazz’s globalization as more of a diaspora or transnational practice caused by the spread of musicians themselves. Nicholson contends, “Globalization is the next major evolutionary stage of the music’s continuing history.”³ Some scholars have also argued that cultural globalization is subject to strictures, where “culture is a clearly bounded entity within a specific location,”⁴ and globalization is actually disruptive, creating a pastiche of various cultures while diluting the original. There are also many critical discussions of hybridization of cultures. Norwegians have created their own distinctive model of jazz through many hybrid features, but their own Nordic essence penetrates and dominates the American influences that remain.

One of the traditional barriers to European jazz identity is the notion that jazz must, in order to remain authentic, represent something that is inherently American. A European musician’s knowledge of American styles was something of a test of

² Nicholson, “The Globalization of Jazz,” *Jazz and Culture in a Global Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2014), Kindle version.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

legitimacy and even loyalty to the traditional historiography. The domineering influence of the African American pioneers of jazz “has set in train a belief that ‘the real jazz’ must follow their precedent.”⁵ Norwegians were either not aware of this notion, or they simply didn’t care about it. They experienced their phase of American imitation, followed closely by a period where they were forced to practice the music in secret. They then learned from avant-garde masters and recontextualized the ideas and innovations of those Americans whose musical processes spoke to something in the Norwegian psyche. As numerous Norwegian musicians have pointed out since critics began documenting the Nordic sound, adherence to the “jazz tradition” was simply not a concern for Garbarek, his groundbreaking quartet, and the musicians that followed in their footsteps.

Some Norwegian musicians explored collective improvisation from a different perspective, adopting the New Orleans style when that revival conquered the European continent in the 1950s. There was a Dixieland movement in Norway, and it flourished for a brief period, but it was rapidly subsumed by the influence of Jan Garbarek, whose distinctive approach to improvisation came to symbolize Norway in the musical imagination. Perhaps Garbarek was notable because his improvisations sounded so European in conception, a contrast to his peers, who were still attempting to emulate American styles and players. Garbarek’s work showed that it was possible for jazz to reflect a more localized essence, one specific to the fjords of his homeland, mediated through the Americanisms of the past but distinctly different from them.

Yet, without a firm grasp of American stylistic values and the knowledge of the conventions of the art form, Norwegians would not have been able to construct their

⁵ Ibid.

distinctive expression. To develop a local or regional musical identity requires a process of imitation and assimilation, eventually followed by emancipation. Norwegian jazz interfaces with American jazz, and authenticity for Norwegian performers is no longer related to invoking American signifiers, but rather, expressing the Norwegian signifiers of folklore, innovation, creativity, and pluralism. Just as any musical style can come to reflect the lives and priorities of the people who make it, jazz was adapted by Norwegians to express their lives and their sensibilities. Jon Christensen told an interviewer, “The people in Scandinavia – we are not born in Harlem, so we have different blues. We have folk music and fjords and the mountains and snow and everything, so we are different to the guys in America.”⁶ These Norwegians simply recast this music to reflect the circumstances of their lives, and in so doing shaped it to reflect a sense of Norwegianness.

The essence of Norwegian jazz lies in improvisation, the salient feature of jazz regardless of where its borders are drawn. No matter how this improvisation is articulated, it will always be the linchpin. The assimilation of American jazz into the local dialect of Norway, reflected in the cool timbres and vocalizations and folk songs of the music, packaged with album art that reinforces the vast, austere aesthetic, is an example of how cultures may meet and spawn hybrid forms that are nonetheless still made up of their influences. There is now a jazz vernacular for numerous countries and territories across the globe. Norway’s is one of the strongest and most distinctive that continues to thrive as a result of public support and government assistance. It thrives because its educational system is geared towards fostering creativity, not slavish

⁶ Jon Christensen, interviewed by Stuart Nicholson, May 23, 1999. Ibid.

reverence for a tradition. Norwegian jazz is a hopeful triumph of musical essence over dogma, a rejection of “the real jazz” and a celebration of all that is new and innovative in improvised music. As an improvised art form, jazz will thrive so long as we remember that any hybridization or cultural influences can only elevate the art form. The current generation of Norwegian jazz musicians is hungry to continue weaving jazz into their national identity. It remains to be seen what the future holds for jazz in Norway, but the music’s continued social popularity seems to hold great promise for new frontiers.

Appendix: Selected Recordings

A short annotated list of recordings discussed for their significance in the development of the Nordic sound. All are LPs recorded 1960 – 1980, with the exception of *Officium*. Recordings are displayed in chronological order by date of recording.

Album: Bengt-Arne Wallins Orkester, *Adventures in Jazz and Folklore* (Dux DPY 1705, 1965)

Recorded: Stockholm, 1965

Notable musicians: Jan Johanssons Kvintett

This is an experimental Swedish recording that combines archival field recordings of Swedish folk songs that are then arranged and reworked in a 1950s/'60s West Coast jazz style. This is like Stan Kenton meets Alan Lomax, a combination that is, if nothing else, fascinating: an early example of the Scandinavian preoccupation with folk music in jazz, which was clearly not just a Norwegian phenomenon.

Album: George Russell, *The Essence of George Russell* (Sonet SLP 1411/1412, 1971)

Recorded: Stockholm, 1966-67

Notable musicians: Jan Garbarek – tenor sax, clarinet, flute; Terje Rypdal – guitar; Arild Andersen – bass; Jon Christensen – drums; multiple Swedish session players

Released on Norwegian label Sonet in 1971, this is a big band fusion record blending electronics with contemporary jazz and chamber music. A reviewer describes the “propulsive, groove-oriented themes” that would become a mainstay of Norwegian jazz, and Russell’s theoretical concepts are also on display in the compositions. Most of the album is taken up by Russell’s three-movement suite, “Electric Sonata for Souls Loved by Nature.”

Album: Terje Rypdal, *Bleak House* (Polydor 184 189, 1968)

Recorded: Oslo, 1968

Notable musicians: Jan Garbarek – saxophones; Jon Christensen – drums

This is a Norwegian fusion record featuring guitarist Rypdal (his solo debut) before his long association with ECM records. With lots of blues and Latin influences, this album touches more on the folk music aspects of the Norwegian style than the frostier aesthetic. Despite the title, which implies stereotypically Scandinavian austerity, the record is warm and accessible.

Album: Jan Garbarek, *Afric Pepperbird* (ECM 1007, 1970)

Recorded: Oslo, 1970

Notable musicians: Jan Garbarek – reeds; Terje Rypdal – guitar; Arild Andersen – bass; Jon Christensen – drums

This early release from Garbarek's first great quartet is a showcase of the Nordic free improvisational style as it came to be codified on later ECM releases. The youthful Garbarek's approach is confident and aggressive throughout, and his improvisations are wide-ranging in mood and tone and display a broad variety of vocalizations, altissimo, and other extended techniques.

Album: Don Cherry & Krzysztof Penderecki, *Actions* (Philips 6305 153, 1971)

Recorded: Donaueschingen, Germany, 1971

Notable musicians: Terje Rypdal – guitar; Albert Mangelsdorff – trombone; Kenny Wheeler – trumpet, cornet; a who's-who of German session players

Later released on the Wergo and Intuition labels, this is a live avant-garde recording conducted by Penderecki, fusing free improvisation with avant-garde classical music. In his piece "Actions for Free Jazz Orchestra," Penderecki sketched four sections of contrasting character and provided what he termed "stimulators" or "actions," which were brief notated melodic lines designed to give the improvisers a starting point for improvisation. There is no score to the piece; it was recorded live at the Donaueschingen Festival in 1971. Don Cherry's New Eternal Rhythm Orchestra shows off some impressive extended techniques and a large palette of strange sounds that falls firmly in the avant-garde category.

Album: The Esoteric Circle, *George Russell Presents the Esoteric Circle* (Flying Dutchman FD-10125, FD 10125, 1971)

Recorded: Bærum, Norway, 1971

Notable musicians: Jan Garbarek – reeds; Terje Rypdal – guitar; Arild Andersen – bass; Jon Christensen – drums

Garbarek's first quartet recorded under the moniker The Esoteric Circle while under the direct tutelage of George Russell. Garbarek's playing is much more aggressive than many of his later 1970s releases, and there are subtle homages to his teacher's ideas throughout. Garbarek channels Albert Ayler and Coltrane, and there is a direct reference to Coltrane on Garbarek's composition "Traneflight" and another shout-out via the track "Nefertite." Given Russell's involvement, there are some moments where the recording veers into funk groove territory, with Rypdal in particular showing off his abilities on the jam "Rabalder."

Album: Art Lande & Jan Garbarek, *Red Lanta* (ECM 1038 ST, 1974)

Recorded: Oslo, 1973

Notable musicians: Jan Garbarek – flutes, soprano and bass sax; Art Lande, piano

Released on ECM in 1974, this is one of the records that would come to define the ECM “sound” for several years, produced by Manfred Eicher, the label’s founder. Brian Olewnick at allmusic.com writes that the album “is a series of piano/reed duets that have a Scandinavian starkness offset, somewhat unfortunately, by a soft sentimentality that verges on kitsch.” This “Scandinavian starkness” could refer to the album’s instrumentation, which is devoid of rhythm instruments or a strong harmonic underpinning. It sounds like a more folk-influenced Keith Jarrett.

Album: Ralph Towner, *Solstice* (ECM 1060, 1975)

Recorded: Oslo, 1974

Notable musicians: Ralph Towner – guitars, piano; Jan Garbarek – flute, tenor and soprano sax; Eberhard Weber – bass, cello; Jon Christensen – drums

The players on this album, which was produced by Manfred Eicher, are quintessentially ECM for the time period, and all played a role in defining the ECM sound of the 1970s. Some keening, intense sax work from Garbarek is combined with copious reverb and overdubbing. Towner plays some very impressionistic piano on one track, a la Gil Evans. The musicians create a distinctive soundscape, and Christensen’s drumming and Weber’s bass virtuosity are essential to holding the whole thing together. Highlights are Garbarek’s flute playing and Weber’s electric cello solo on “Nimbus.”

Album: Torgrim Sollid, *Østerdalsmusikk* (Plateselskapet MAI – MAI 7510, 1975)

Recorded: Oslo, 1974

Notable musicians: Jan Garbarek – soprano and tenor saxophones; Erling Aksdal – piano; Bjørn Alterhaug – bass, vocals; Ole Jacob Hanssen – drums

This album was conceived as a deliberate fusion of traditional Norwegian folk music and improvised jazz. The title translates to “Eastern Valley Music,” and is a reference to a famous collection of folk songs collected by a Norwegian musicologist during the early twentieth century. Trumpet player Torgrim Sollid created the majority of the arrangements based on the work of Ole Mørk Sandvik, whose song collections were well known in Norwegian musical circles. Sollid had been performing with Garbarek since 1962. The resulting music on this recording was dubbed “mountain jazz” and is one of the illustrative examples of this folk music/jazz fusion.

Album: Various Artists, *Black is the Color of My True Love’s Hair: A Selection of Norwegian Folk Jazz 1971-1977* (Plastic Strip PSCD712, 2009)

Recorded: Norway, 1971-1977

Notable musicians: Anne Karin Tønset – vocals; Egil Kapstad – piano; Harald Gundhus – reeds; Egil “Bop” Johansen – drums; Terje Rypdal – guitars

A fascinating album of experimental recordings gathered during the 1970s at the height of the Norwegian folk jazz craze. The liner notes provide a wealth of background information on the activities of Norwegian song collectors and the jazz musicians who were fascinated by Norwegian folk music. The album is also notable for the presence of guitarist Rypdal, a stalwart of Jan Garbarek's small groups and himself responsible for codifying the Nordic sound.

Album: Charlie Haden, *Folk Songs* (ECM 1170, 2301 170, 1981)

Recorded: Oslo, 1979

Notable musicians: Jan Garbarek – soprano and tenor saxophones; Charlie Haden – bass; Egberto Gismonti – guitar and piano

Released under Charlie Haden's name as leader, this is a collaboration between Garbarek, bassist Haden, and Egberto Gismonti that fuses atmospheric drones with free improvisation and folk songs, and even a bit of world music. The moody, spacious aesthetic is firmly in line with the ECM oeuvre of the late 1970s. Produced by Manfred Eicher himself, this is yet another example of the Norwegian fashion for pluralistic combinations of genres and sounds.

Album: Jan Garbarek & The Hilliard Ensemble, *Officium* (ECM 1525, 445 369-2, ECM New Series 1525, 1994)

Recorded: Sankt Gerold, Austria 1993

Notable musicians: Jan Garbarek – soprano and tenor saxophones; David James – countertenor; Gordon Jones – baritone; The Hilliard Ensemble – vocals

This recording represents Garbarek's foray into jazz improvisation in combination with Gregorian chant and Renaissance vocal polyphony. Recorded at the Benedictine priory of Propstei St. Gerold in Austria, Garbarek's reverb-drenched saxophone soars over waves of sound generated by the voices. At times Garbarek shows great restraint and allows ample space for the ancient plainchant to unfold, his spacious solos taking on a deeply spiritual character. Amusingly, a South African novelist, reviewing the recording on Amazon.com, claimed in complete earnestness that this album is "what Coltrane hears in heaven." There is an undeniable spirituality in Garbarek's aesthetic, underscored by the reverence of the vocal music and the acoustics of the surroundings.

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